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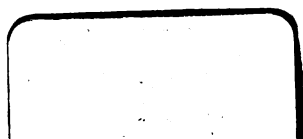
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ETHEL'S ROMANCE.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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ETHEL'S ROMANCE.

A Novel.

BY
MATILDA HOMERSHAM.

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
Are but as ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame."

COLERIDGE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.



LONDON:
CHARLES W. WOOD, 13, TAVISTOCK ST., STRAND.

1868.

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ETHEL'S ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

"Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet!

Gazing, with a timid glance,
On the brooklet's swift advance,
On the river's broad expanse!

Deep and still, that gliding stream
Beautiful to thee must seem,
As the river of a dream."

LONGFELLOW'S "*Maidenhood.*"

27
ABOUT seventy miles from London, in one of the rural midland counties, is situated the small, old-fashioned town of Maxwell. It lies four miles from Lyton, the nearest railway station. The town, at one time, consisted of a long, straggling street, whence diverged various courts and alleys, in which babies and beershops abounded, and where clothes were per-

petually hung out to dry, as though the inhabitants kept the principal part of their wardrobes on the line.

In the High Street there were some old-fashioned red-brick houses, with projecting roofs, forming convenient eaves for the swallows, and shelter for passers-by on rainy days. The shops were few, and exhibited an incongruous combination in their windows, sausages and stamps being sold together, candles and linendrapery appearing in juxtaposition. The only circulating library was kept by an old woman, who took in mangling, and let out a donkey-cart. Maxwell had not progressed with the rest of the world. It was behind its generation. The distance from a railway station had much to do with this, but the spirit of the people still more. The Maxwellians could boast, however, of a Town Hall, recently built at the expense of the late Lord Talbot, who had lived in the old red-brick Hall, up yonder, behind those grand old cedars. This

nobleman had been a good friend to Maxwell in many respects. He had resided principally at his own estate, giving much time and money to his tenants, and being, in his old-fashioned uprightness, a notable contrast to his son, the present earl, who, at an early age, had squandered his income, and mortgaged the greater part of his estate.

About a quarter of a mile from the town, on the high road to Lyton, stood the house of Surgeon Gresham, the chief doctor of the place. You entered the garden by a white gate, which shone brilliantly in the setting sun on this June evening. On this gate leant Ethel Gresham, the doctor's only daughter.

By her side stood Harriett Mayne, sister to the vicar of Maxwell; a very useful young lady in the parish, and Ethel's great friend.

"So you have been waiting here some time, Ethel," said Harriett, who was the

elder and taller of the two girls. "Don't you think it will appear over-anxious on your part to be looking out for the coach?"

"But I *am* anxious," replied Ethel, ingenuously; "indeed, we are all anxious about his coming. You know how over-worked papa is with this dreadful fever. Besides, is not Mr. Langley my brother's old friend?—and mamma sent me to look out."

At this last unquestionable authority for her conduct, Ethel looked straight up in her companion's face, as though defying reproof for having watched half an hour for the coach that was coming from Lyton.

"Justin won't come to help papa when he is so busy, so of course he must get an assistant." It's too bad of Justin; he has not been at home for six months."

"You should not judge your brother too harshly," said Harriett, in a deliberate voice, that made a striking contrast to

Ethel's eager manner. The latter, somewhat of a beauty, was also a spoilt child, impulsive in all her words and actions.

"Justin, you know, is ambitious," continued Harriett. "He could not have borne the dull life of Maxwell." She said this with a certain tone of repugnance, as though her birthplace were becoming rather too narrow a sphere for her also.

"Maxwell has been good enough for papa," replied Ethel, with some warmth. "But"—and she gazed full in the face of her companion—"are you not happy here?"

"Pretty well," returned Harriett, evasively. "I wonder when the coach will come?" and she turned and looked down the road towards Lyton.

The long, level road, with its straight hedges, did not offer much to attract the eye; but its monotony at the moment was broken by a drove of cows, lowing as they came peacefully to their home, a farm somewhat lower down the road, and near the

village of Maxwell, which lies in the hollow to the left.

As the cowherd passed them, he gave a "Good evening" to each of the girls standing by the gate, for they were both well known in Maxwell, and there was scarcely a cottager who had not at some time cause to be grateful to Miss Mayne's care and kindness. The clergyman's wife was as a cypher, in public esteem, compared to the clergyman's sister. But Ethel's claim to the respect of the poorer parishioners was not of this kind. It did not owe itself to her activity and industry—it was more to her having been born and bred in Maxwell, and to her being considered the beauty of the place.

Ethel was scarcely a beauty, but she was certainly very pretty, with a childish, fascinating prettiness, captivating to old people and serious men, for it reminded them by its fresh buoyancy of a brightness they had either outlived or never possessed. She had



a small figure ; perfect little hands and feet ; a head crowned with the rare beauty of dark natural curls—round curls, that fit naturally into a locket, and have a certain way of twining around fingers—and affections.

Now, there are some people, whom we can see at once have an entire knowledge of their own beauty ; they carry it about with them, and continually betray, by their actions, words, and looks, this consciousness of their attractions ; but Ethel was not one of these. We will not say she did not know she was pretty, because she was already eighteen, but she did not appear to know it. She looked a bright, glad creature ; one of those who seem to have absorbed more sunshine into their composition than the rest of the world. We feel as we gaze on the frank brow, and trusting gray eyes, that we should like to hide some of the dark scenes of life from her ; we should be sorry for earth's loud angry sounds to jar

upon her ear; for her to know or even guess some of the woe and wickedness of this world.

Harriett was a striking contrast to Ethel; she was not so pretty, but more uncommon in her appearance. A slim, lithe figure, very erect, the head set well upon the graceful shoulders. There was something haughty in her manner; a haughtiness that repelled strangers, and made them consider her cold and unsympathising; but her friends knew better, and after they had once got near her warm heart all that apparent frigidity disappeared. Harriett had more pride than Ethel; but it was a natural, not an assumed pride. The girl had not a grain of affectation in her whole character; she was clear-sighted and clear-headed in the extreme, with a good true heart, and a good sound intellect. She had thoughtful brown eyes, a small determined mouth, bright complexion, and hair that her friends called auburn—her enemies, red.

After more talking on Ethel's part, Harriett presently found room to say, "I am confident you will be disappointed in Mr. Langley. I had a letter from Justin the other day, in which he said he was not at all a lady's man."

"Oh! does Justin still write to you? Why, you have corresponded with him ever since he went to school. I remember his asking you to do so, and you promised in quite a solemn manner. But, about Mr. Langley—I believe Justin intends him for you," said Ethel, suddenly, with a roguish glance at her friend.

Harriett smiled—rather sadly, perhaps.

"You may smile; but you know what a firm will Justin has. If once he makes up his mind, you will have to take this young man; just in the same way that you read the books Justin recommends, and mamma takes the pills he orders, and I—after a little rebellion, I must own—do as he tells me." Ethel shook her head sagely, and

then looked down the road. "See! there is a cloud of dust. Yes—it is the coach. Here it comes!"

It was the coach. It came to the gate and drew up.

"That's Mr. Langley," Ethel whispered to her friend, indicating an aristocratic young man seated on the box. But, as he made no attempt to alight, Ethel concluded she was mistaken.

The coachman, who had been informed that Mr. Gresham's new assistant was coming, had been on the look-out for him. Handing the reins to a stranger beside him, with the usual politeness of coachmen, he got down, and ventured to address himself to the young ladies. "Saw nothing of the gent, miss. There's only two come by this train; a friend of Lord Talbot's," jerking his thumb in the direction of the young man, "and a friend of Mr. Leslie's—a priest sort of chap. We was quite delayed looking arter the young doctor. I'm sorry,

miss; hope it won't put the doctor out. Hope the parson's well, Miss Mayne. When you come my way, if you'll drop in and see my old woman, we shall be obliged—she's bad with her rheumatiz again. There's another train at half-past nine, miss, addressing Ethel again, "we shall be here about ten—good evening." And, touching his hat, he mounted to his seat, and took the reins from the hands of the stranger, who had been staring at Ethel and her friend, instead of looking after the horses. His look at Ethel was so fixed, that she, not accustomed to open admiration (or vulgar curiosity, which you please), blushed deeply.

"Oh, dear! how tiresome," sighed Ethel, when the coach had passed on. "I wonder who that gentleman is, for Talbot Hall? It is strange Lord Talbot did not send the carriage for him."

"It is Mr. St. Clare," replied Harriett. "I saw Lord Talbot this afternoon."

“Did you?” interrupted Ethel. “You did not tell me so.”

“I did not think it a matter of great moment or interest to you. I was out walking with the children, about three o'clock; he was in the carriage. He stopped and told me he was on his way to Lyton, to meet a friend from London—Mr. St. Clare. The friend, I suppose, came by a later train, and was obliged to put up with the humble accommodation of the coach.”

“How odd that we should both expect friends, and neither of them should come at the time appointed. But you will stay and take tea with us, Harriett?”

“I cannot, Ethel. If you knew the amount of work I have to get through to-night, you would not wish to delay me a moment. I have, for one thing, some slippers for the bazaar, that must be finished to-night; I have also to call on two people, for things they have promised to——”

“Oh! by the bye,” again interrupted

Ethel, "I intend doing something for the bazaar myself. I do indeed, so don't shake your head. I shall start off the very first thing to-morrow morning with all my baggage, to take a sketch. There is a dear little nook up in the Park, where no one ever comes but the deer. Well, you are really going? then, good-bye. Come to-morrow, if you can. Mr. Langley must be here by that time."

Ethel still stood leaning against the gate after her friend had gone. She watched her as, in her dark, quiet dress, with that quick, decided step of hers, she descended the incline towards the town. Down the descent went the erect figure; now, Ethel only saw her head; a moment more, and she had vanished from sight altogether.

Mrs. Gresham was sitting in the pretty little parlour, with the tea-things before her, when Ethel entered, with a slightly downcast expression of face. Her mother read in it the confirmation of a doubt which Ethel's long absence had caused.

"He has not come, mamma."

"Ah! I thought so, my dear. Very tiresome, very. Your papa will be very much annoyed, I fear." And after pouring out Ethel's tea, Mrs. Gresham sank back wearily into an arm-chair, and took her little dog, Trill, on her lap.

At the first glance, any one with an atom of discernment might perceive that Mrs. Gresham was a lady. Now, what is a lady? There are many very different opinions on this point, and we dare say scarcely two people would agree as to its exact definition. Some people think a lady is a person who dresses with taste, has a low-toned voice, and a subdued manner. Others think to be aristocratic, fanciful, generally helpless and weak-minded, constitutes the perfection of a gentlewoman. Some think apathy, or assumed indifference to everything and everybody, the height of good manners. For our own part, we do not think that a sort of galvanised doll, who

dares not stir beyond the precincts, or infringe the laws of society, is necessarily a lady. There may be rudeness and coarseness underlying this varnish, and a true lady has about her nothing assumed. She will be as gentle and polite in speaking to her dependent as to her guest. We begin to think that what constitutes a lady is almost undefinable; we have puzzled over it long, and have come to no definite conclusion. We perceive the negative side of the case—what a lady is not; but we cannot grasp and examine the positive—what a lady is. We know what a TRUE WOMAN is; and if we do not offend refined ears by the avowal, we must say we infinitely prefer and respect her. There are certain outbursts of gracious emotion, a certain vivacity and frankness, which are not consistent with a lady's manner. The natural must be sacrificed to the genteel; the thing that is true to the thing that is expedient.

Mrs. Gresham shut her eyes, and leant back in her chair, as though about to doze, but she did not sleep ; she was too occupied with anxious thoughts. She was a little annoyed at Mr. Langley's want of punctuality ; in fact, she was annoyed at his coming there at all, and had opposed it very strenuously, until, in Mr. Gresham's failing strength, she saw the absolute necessity of his having some assistance. It would more than ever disturb the quiet of her household, she thought, to have a strange young man about ; one, too, who would want his meals at all manner of odd and inconvenient hours ; it was quite bad enough to have her own husband rushing in at any time during the day, from one until nine, demanding " something to eat, at once ! " Her housekeeping miserably distracted her at times. Many a silent tear she shed (she was a weak-minded woman, remember) over some especially dainty little dinner she had prepared for Mr. Gresham, sometimes with her own

hands, which had to be kept hot hour after hour, until it was all dried up and spoiled, or left to get cold, and then given over with regret to the kitchen consumption. It was no use the doctor declaring he was not an epicure, and anything would do for him—a bit of cold meat, a chop, or bread and cheese ; she knew all men appreciated good dinners ; and when he did come home at the proper time, and partook of a satisfactory meal, she could tell by the bland, after-dinner smile on his face that he was as other men. Besides, there was another anxiety connected with Mr. Langley's coming. He and Ethel might take a fancy to each other ; she knew the danger of proximity of two young people in one house, seeing each other daily. And there was no avoiding it ; they must see each other, however much she tried to keep them apart, and were very likely to fall in love. Ethel was too young yet to think of marriage ; and when she did marry, Mrs. Gresham was

a little more ambitious for her than to give her to her father's assistant, who might be years before he made any position for himself.

Ethel, who had been sitting by the window, with her hands idly folded in her lap, indulging in we don't know what romantic day-dreams, was suddenly startled by seeing a tall form pass the window, and enter the hall-door, which she had left open. Before she could rise from her chair, Trill had bounded from Mrs. Gresham's lap, and was barking furiously. A tap came at the door, and at Ethel's "Come in," a gentleman with a black bag entered, and stumbled over poor Trill, sending him whining back to his mistress.

"This is Mr. Gresham's, I believe?" inquired the stranger, raising his hat; "I found the door open, and took the liberty of entering."

"Yes; I suppose you are Mr. Langley. Mamma, it is Mr. Langley."

Mrs. Gresham advanced, with her dog in her arms, and shook hands with the young man, expressing her concern at his missing the train and being so late.

"I came by the train Mr. Gresham named."

"Indeed! then why did you not take the coach?"

"I was not aware that there was any conveyance from Lyton. I walked. Some man directed me by what he called a short cut across the fields, and I somehow lost my way. I am sure I must apologize for putting you out."

"Not at all," replied Mrs. Gresham. "I only fear you must be so very tired; quite faint and hungry."

All this time Ethel had been trying to light a candle, but when she had struck a match, she could not suppress her curiosity to glance at the stranger. The neglected lucifer went out before she had been able to accomplish her purpose, and the lighted

lamp was brought in by the servant, in answer to Mrs. Gresham's summons.

Ethel thought it might be the sudden light that dazzled Mr. Langley; but as he met her eyes, he seemed considerably embarrassed. He was standing irresolutely by the table, with his black bag in his hand. She saw he was tall and broad, looking much older than she anticipated; moreover, just now he was ill at ease.

Mrs. Gresham had left the room on "household cares intent," and Ethel was puzzled how best to relieve the stranger's evident embarrassment. She begged him to seat himself. He thanked her, took a chair, and put down the bag, at which the injured Trill came and sniffed suspiciously.

"I hope you will like Maxwell," Ethel remarked, with an effort at conversation; for somehow the shyness of the stranger seemed to check her general talkativeness. "It is not a large place, and I dare say you

will find it dull at first, after the bustle of London."

"I hope I shall have too much to occupy me to have time to think about dullness," he replied, in a deep, pleasant voice, raising a pair of shy brown eyes to her face. Then Ethel felt she must make an effort to be sociable, and she could think of no subject so suitable for a topic of conversation as the fever.

"I have no doubt you will be very busy just now, for the fever is worse than ever; it comes to us every summer; papa is very angry about it, because he says that the Irish, who come for the hay-making, bring it, and it is half their own faults. They are a very dirty set of people."

"You are not afraid of contagion, Miss Gresham?"

"No. You see, I hear so much about it from papa that I get somehow used to it; besides, we never have caught anything from him, for he is very careful. But I

am not as brave as Harriett—Miss Mayne, I mean. You have, no doubt, heard of her from Justin ?”

Mr. Langley smiled, and replied that he had heard a great deal of Miss Mayne, and of all her usefulness in the parish.

“Ah! I thought that dear old Justin would have talked of her,” cried Ethel. “She is so good; she goes into these cottages, where there is fever, without any fear.”

Here Mrs. Gresham returned, with the servant bearing the tea-tray; so Ethel's eloquence regarding her friend was stopped in mid-career.

CHAPTER II.

"To go through life unloving and unloved,
To feel that thirst and hunger of the soul
We cannot still; that longing, that wild impulse,
And struggle after something we have not."

LONGFELLOW.

"PASS the claret, St. Clare. Now old Somers and the dinner things have departed, we can talk at our ease. You noticed my silence at dinner, no doubt, but poor old Somers shakes his head so solemnly over everything I say, that it's a thorough annoyance to me. If I am dull, it's 'My lord has not the spirits he used to have.' If I am lively, he wonders in his old mind how I can be so gay, when the estate is going to ruin. If I speak of foreign travel, he wishes I had some interest in my own county. If I name pictures, he sighs over my papistical fondness for Madonnas. Therefore, as I care little for sporting and country

life, I am silent for my servant's peace of mind."

Thus speaking, Henry, Lord Talbot threw himself into an arm-chair, and helped himself to a few of the finest strawberries.

The person addressed as St. Clare, the only other occupant of the room, was the stranger who stared at Ethel Gresham from the outside of the Lyton coach.

"Somers is a faithful old servant, and deserves some consideration, Henry."

This remark was made with a languid smile; politeness compelled some response, but the speaker appeared to have little interest in the topic. He was seated in a high-backed, old-fashioned chair, his head resting wearily on his hand, his eyes fixed abstractedly at a portrait opposite him; there was an absorbed, dreamy expression in his face which did not argue well for the liveliness or social qualities of Lord Talbot's guest.

Ernest St. Clare was not a lively young

man. He had lived too much alone ; too much with books instead of men, and in the realms of his own fancy rather than the world of every-day life, to be sociable and gay. His manners and conversation were so unlike those of any ordinary gentleman of this busy, chattering, slang-using nineteenth century, that it appeared rather as though he had been taken bodily out of the Elizabethan era and dropped into this. The face on which the one stream of light in the sombre room fell was fair as a girl's, with a beauty eminently poetic, and redeemed from its feminine softness only by the breadth and fulness of the brow. It was a finely-shaped head, a little too full, perhaps, in the organs of wonder and ideality, causing the possessor to be habitually an unpractical dreamer ; but still a nobly-proportioned and well-developed head. If Ernest St. Clare has been indolent in the world of action, he has not been so in that of thought.

The room in which these two were

seated was small and dark. The light, coming in faintly through the high recessed windows, illumined but partially the sombre furniture, and the family portraits which hung around—portraits with grim faces that seemed to look down scornfully on the present descendant of their line. The light fell on the white vases, flowers, and fruit arranged elegantly on the polished oak table; it fell on the wine in the glass Lord Talbot was fingering, and on the fair head of his guest. There was an aspect of refinement about the room which proclaimed the owner a man of taste. The dessert service, the decanters, and glasses were perfect in their way.

“Still the same old dreamer, St. Clare, as in former times. Your Continental life has not yet roused you to be a man of action. What interest can you find in looking at that old dame? She seems quite astonished at your gaze. Indeed, I never look at my respected ancestress; she is far too ugly.”

"Why do you choose to dine in this ghost-like apartment?" inquired St. Clare, turning slowly from the picture, and looking at his friend.

"For a very good reason; because it is the only one in the old place at all comfortable. What a horrible way you have of staring, Ernest! Do rouse up, and take a glass of wine. Your eyes make me quite miserable."

St. Clare did not heed the claret-jug, which was pushed towards him; and Talbot, after a pause, leaning his elbow on the table, and gazing earnestly in his companion's face, said, almost in a whisper, his whole countenance changing from its usual careless expression:

"You looked so like your sister, then."

"Ah!" returned St. Clare, "have you seen her lately?"

"Yes, about a month ago. But it is always painful, and only revives bitter memories—old wishes that must be crushed."

“Then there is still no hope?”

“No well-grounded hope. I have done with that dream,” said Talbot, closing his hand tightly. “I have made up my mind to think no more upon the subject. Pshaw! it comes over me at times; but I know it is all folly and impossibility. Who could marry a——”

“Hush!” cried St. Clare, half-starting from his seat. “Spare me that word.”

“I beg your pardon, old fellow;” and there was an unwonted tenderness in Talbot’s tone. “Hang me! I forgot what I was saying. Well, it’s little use fretting over the past; I’ve been moping here until I’ve become quite miserable lately; but if I had your money, I’d show you what a jolly thing life is.”

“You are quite welcome to my money, Henry. I only wish I knew how to spend it. Unfortunately, perhaps, for me, however, I see no pleasure in gaming, horse-racing, or squandering wealth in the society

of opera-singers and ballet-dancers. I have neither stupidity nor a very good digestion, so I cannot hope to be specially happy."

"Why don't you take to domesticity and philanthropy, old fellow? My friends who have tried it tell me there is a great deal of comfort to be got in that line."

A slight quiver came across St. Clare's mouth, as he answered: "You will, of course, consider me Utopian, but after much consideration I do not think it would be right for me to marry."

"That shows you have never been in love," remarked Talbot, "or you would soon dismiss such fantastic scruples."

St. Clare did not answer; but after a pause, he said, more to himself than Talbot, "All the poets say, life is a riddle, and a puzzle to me it is; there is no satisfaction, no hope, no joy. I seem to play at life. I read a little—then weary of that; play a little, then weary of that also; seize brushes and colours, and paint until I have a fit of

disgust, and don't touch my brush for a week. Perhaps I should have been happier had I been poor."

"Did you ever try drinking as a diversion?" asked Talbot.

"Indeed no. I had an example of that in my unfortunate father." And St. Clare somewhat impatiently pushed back his chair, as though he felt stifled in the dark room, and longed to get to the light. He felt that his companion did not understand him, that he could not enter into the peculiarities of his temperament. Talbot was associated with the saddest recollections of his life, so St. Clare looked out of the window across the grounds and park, craving from nature the sympathy he failed to find in man.

There was a soft pink hue in the west, purple were the trees and distant hills; purple a ruin that stood alone upon an opposite hill, distinctly seen against the sky. Upon this St. Clare's attention seemed

fixed ; its isolation, perhaps, touched a kindred feeling in his breast, for he was an orphan ; alone—quite alone—an alien, and homeless in his own country. After wandering about for years, as restless as a Bedouin Arab, never stopping long in one place, never finding the peace he sought, he had returned to England, where but one beside Talbot cared for his return ; but one besides him had looked forward to it ; and from that one being, his sister, he was separated by a most sad and dark calamity. Although St. Clare was high-born, brilliant, handsome, and rich, Talbot was his sole friend, and the connexion arose more from early association and habit than from natural taste or liking.

Gray and grayer became the landscape, grayer the solitary ruin yonder on the hill. The mist rose and wrapped everything gradually like an ever-increasing veil of evil, a cold and dreary shutting out of the fair prospect, and something in the scene

and its melancholy veil touched the morbid feelings of St. Clare. Hopeless had been his past life, hopeless seemed his future, aimless and barren ; it was long looking back, and long looking forward ; looking into a gray mist rising, rising and shutting away from him the fair world whose beauty he loved with a true poet's soul, fervently and well.

“ Oh ! that I might die,” he sighed, “ sooner than be thus shut away from love and sympathy—sooner than live to meet the horrible destiny that awaits me—oh, that I might die !”

How often we cry out thus, thoughtlessly, to be taken, and the Ever Merciful puts aside our prayers and shuts His ears to them ; for, in His providence, He knows how soon again we shall bless Him for the happiness of life.

Suddenly, like a flash of light, the picture of the two young girls standing at the garden-gate, in the glow of the sunset, passed

before him. With an effort, he shook his gloom from him, and turning to his companion, asked :

“ By the bye, who are the Greshams and the Maynes ? As I came in the coach I saw a little picturesque scene that made me glad I had missed you. We drew up at a gate, where stood two girls—one very pretty, the other tall and graceful ; the coachman told me they were Miss Mayne and Miss Gresham. He likewise informed me that Miss Mayne was the parson's sister, and the late parson's daughter, and a very good young lady.”

“ Don't you remember Gresham ? ” inquired Talbot. “ Why, he came and attended you in that fever you had after your father's death, when you came down here.”

“ Oh, yes. I remember something of him.”

“ He knows nothing that need make you nervous,” said Talbot. “ I took great care of that. I believe he is a clever doctor. He was a great favourite with my mother.”

St. Clare seemed anxious to change the topic, and asked :

“ And how about the *good* Miss Mayne ? ”

Talbot smiled.

“ Yes, she is good. So good and so amiable that had she any other fortune besides these qualities I might be tempted to make her my wife.”

“ I suppose *you* do not think of marrying, Henry ? ”

“ I *think* of it sometimes, but it would not do. Retrench, retrench, my dear boy, that is my little game now. Marriage, unfortunately, involves an establishment. One cannot live down here and visit nobody when one has a countess to deal with. When I marry it must be for money. It is an unpleasant truth, but my estate is deeply mortgaged.”

“ Henry, you know,” commenced St. Clare, eagerly, “ I have money—more than I want, or shall ever want.”

We are sorry to say it—but then men

have an odd way of showing feeling—Talbot swore, and then got up and rang the bell for coffee.

“If you say a word of such a thing again, I'll tell Somers to bring your port-manteau down. Don't be foolish and let me ruin you. I know you mean it, Ernest, and I thank you; but don't be generous to me, because, on my honour, I don't deserve it. I think I have heard in church that ‘whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’ I have sown my wild oats, and I must reap accordingly. But here are the lights and the coffee, so a truce to melancholy. Ah! I was telling you about the Maynes. Mayne is a gentlemanly fellow; I knew him slightly at Oxford, but our sets were different; he was a reading man. I was not. However, as his father held the living, and took good care of the parish, I thought the son might as well succeed him. Like most country parsons, he is poor, proud, and honest; be-

sides these inconveniences, he has a delicate, high-bred wife ; and a fast-increasing family. So, notwithstanding my late conversion to the Holy Catholic Church——”

“ By the bye, what’s it all about ? Is it a fact what I’ve heard ? ” asked St. Clare.

“ Well, Father Petre, my confessor, says so. It saves a great deal of trouble, and I’m fond of mediæval architecture ; at all events, this Italian is a very pleasant man and companion. Mayne, poor man, is extremely fidgety about my spiritual welfare. I don’t know where it is, or what it is, so never trouble about it, but refer all questions as to my blackness, whiteness, or chance of salvation, to the reverend Father.”

“ I never could understand you,” said St. Clare, with rather an expression of disgust on his face. “ However trivial the forms of religion may appear to you, they hold, or have once held, signs of holy things. I wonder, as a man of taste and delicacy, you do not abstain from a display

of pretended devotion. Somers told me, with a look of horror, that you attended Mass. But we won't discuss this topic further. I want to hear about the Greshams."

"I am not very intimate with them," replied Talbot. "The old fellow is proud and strict, and would never seek one above him in station. Little Ethel is pretty, but childish. We will get up an acquaintance, if it amuses you."

While Talbot is thus commenting on the Greshams, we may as well describe him. He has that man-of-the-world aspect that passes for any age—five-and-twenty or five-and-forty. Taller than St. Clare, but quite as slim; if possible, less robust; there is an absence of vigour about him; refinement and style take the place of manliness. His manners and gait are peculiarly slow and graceful, yet hardly attractive, because they betray an utter indifference to everything and everybody, and his gentleness cannot

gloss over his open contempt. Perhaps, when surrounded by those he really admired and cared about (if that could ever be the case now), his eyes might brighten, his head be raised from its indolent stoop, his hands—slender, beautiful hands they are—cease to stroke that pale *souçon* of a moustache, not thick enough to hide a lip curling in disdain, half of you, half of himself. Most women thought his manners agreeable, and were overcome by that deferential bend of the head, and softening of the voice, when he addressed them. Harriett Mayne was one of these. Despite what her reason said about the indolence of his manners, she admired them; and however prudence might admonish “it means nothing,” she was touched by his softened voice, and gratified by his attention, and would let nothing but her home and parish duties stand between her and an opportunity of being in his company. Yet, when there, she said but little, and certainly did not strive to please him;

she was curt and sarcastic, and appeared to care nothing for him or his opinion. But when he leaned towards her and said, "Miss Mayne," or sometimes, "Harriett, you will teach me better," while his hair fell forward and almost touched hers, the stupid words thrilled her, and the faint blush would rise to betray her weakness. He saw it, knew by heart each little trick to please her, the very turn of the phrase that would win her attention, and how close he dare press her hand without awakening a haughty repulse. A self-indulgent, self-confident man was Henry Talbot, with a firm belief in himself, and a doubt of everybody else. A pleasure-loving, pain-eschewing man, living always for the present, shutting out the past, and careless of the future. Yet withal he was not wholly selfish, or bad; he was kind and easy, generous and placable. He was not troubled with much pride of position, so, rather than have no society—his income not permitting

him to visit much in his own sphere—he amiably condescended to visit the small gentry of his neighbourhood.

An indolent aimlessness had been the bane of Lord Talbot's life, his own will being his sole canon of conduct ; so long as a thing amused or interested him, he saw no reason, and admitted no law, strong enough to induce him to renounce it.

CHAPTER III.

“ Oh ! happy hour, when on the lonely night
Of my past life this sweetest star arose,
Oh ! long-expected star, whose tender light
Sheds on my waiting heart a sweet repose—
Reveals to me the flowers about my feet,
Tells me that I no more must lonely go ! ”

THE Greshams were all early risers, and breakfasted punctually at eight o'clock ; but Martin Langley, in his anxiety to please, and do all that was right, rose a couple of hours before that time. By so doing he found himself greatly in the housemaid's way, who, in whatever room he took refuge, dusted him out. At last he made for the garden, and sauntered up and down, awaiting the breakfast hour.

There was a large garden at the back of the house ; it was gay now with many flowers, and fragrant with roses. Langley admired all, with his weary London eyes—

eyes that had looked on little but brick houses, paved streets, and worn faces, for many months. He had not had time even to glance at the green trees in the park ; and now the sunshine on the dewy grass, the clear sky, the delightful breeze that fanned his cheek, gave him a feeling of exhilaration and joy amounting almost to rapture.

"To one who has been long in city pent
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair and open face of
heaven,
To breathe a prayer full in the face of the blue firmament."

So saith Keats ; and so, no doubt, he felt, when he got away from hospital and lectures, to breathe a prayer on Hampstead Heath. But Martin Langley, although no poet, and unable to put his impressions into words, did not feel the less joy at the sight of the many-coloured butterflies bathing in the morning freshness, and hiding themselves in the hearts of the flowers ; his soul was filled with a blissful thankfulness, none the less acceptable because it was speechless.

He took a small volume from his pocket ; a volume he always carried with him, and which he often found serviceable at the bedside of many a sick patient. He opened it, and read for a few moments ; then closed it, and returned it to its place in his pocket. One of the sentences he had perused was this : " And lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Therefore, as he believed in this, Langley's heart was "not troubled or afraid." He was not worried as to whether his change of position was for the best, or anxious about his coming duties ; he paced the garden, calm and hopeful ; for he relied unhesitatingly and completely on that promise.

Martin Langley was certainly not handsome ; there was a want of animation and light in his countenance, and his mouth and jaw were too large and heavy for actual beauty. Still the soft brown eyes were tender, and the brow was broad and calm ; it was a face one's eyes rest on with

a feeling of reliance and instinctive liking ; a conscious assurance of his uprightness and integrity of heart. There was very little fire or impulse in the man ; a steady plodder, with endless perseverance and a stubborn will ; a pertinacity of purpose which scarcely anything could baffle, and which nothing could subdue. He took in ideas slowly, and held them obstinately, when once realized. He was slow to learn, but slower to forget. Langley's acquaintances, who knew little of the real man, to whom he appeared nothing more than a great, broad-chested, strong-armed, awkward, silent, kind sort of fellow, summed him up as "a steady, matter-of-fact old chap, but decidedly no hero."

When breakfast was at last ready, and Mr. Gresham called him in to it, complimenting him on his early rising, did any of the family at all comprehend this new inmate of their house, who ate his breakfast with such hearty relish, and glanced with such shy admiration at Ethel ?

We think Mr. Gresham has never been introduced to the reader, and we will now endeavour to pourtray him. A small, spare man; with keen dark eyes, and a rather hawk-like nose. He had been a handsome man in his time, and was still good-looking, and he had a pleased consciousness of this, without any conceit. He valued himself and his own qualifications, but did not vaunt himself, nor was he disagreeably self-sufficient. He merely appreciated himself, his own skill, sense, and shrewdness.

Addressing Langley, after a pause, he said, "A strange fancy, that of my son's, for insanity, is it not?"

For Justin Gresham was a doctor at a private lunatic asylum.

"I hardly think it strange, sir. Justin has vast discernment of character, great firmness and self-control; therefore, he influences the minds of others. He knows his power; it is pleasant for him to feel it and to use it."

"Was he well and happy when you saw him last?" Mrs. Gresham inquired.

"Yes," began Langley, a little doubtfully, glancing rather uneasily at her. "He seemed rather overworked, I thought."

"Indeed," exclaimed the mother, her interest keenly excited by his words. "Did he look haggard or worn? Tell us the truth, Mr. Langley. He never speaks of himself in his letters."

"I think it is only anxiety of mind, madam. If he came home, and were quiet for a week, it would do him all the good possible. He complained to me of not sleeping well, and, really, I did not wonder at it. To be awakened night after night by the screaming and howling of mad people, would so disturb me that I should never go to sleep at all."

"Dear, dear! Poor boy!" murmured Mrs. Gresham.

"Ah!" said the surgeon, "Justin was always an ambitious fellow."

"No fault that, surely, sir?"

"No; but a misfortune."

"Talking of ambition, sir, is that fellow Smithers still here?"

"Yes," replied the doctor, looking up almost ferociously from his plate.

"He told Justin he was coming to cut you out, when he heard there was only one doctor in Maxwell."

"Very kind of him, I'm sure," returned the doctor. "He has opened a great flaring shop, calls it a surgery, and dubs himself 'Dr. Smithers' on a great brass plate upon the door. Confound him! That 'Dr.' of his has done more harm to some of my credulous patients than I can tell you."

"But his doctorship is only a foreign degree," said Langley, rather amused at Mr. Gresham's vehemence.

"Can you ride?" inquired the doctor, after a pause, turning the conversation.

"After a fashion."

"I can give you a stout cob, upon which

you may get about the country—I use a gig myself. Come, let us go into the surgery.”

Then the two gentlemen left the room, to have a little professional chat, after which the gig was ordered round. But before he started, Mr. Gresham came in and told his wife and daughter that he thought he should like the young man very well ; he seemed to have a thorough knowledge of his profession, and was evidently quiet and steady —“ a good fellow, depend upon it, my dear.”

But Mrs. Gresham could not agree with her husband. She had no doubt Mr. Langley had good abilities, and was a very estimable character, but he was clumsy ; he had none of the polish of a gentleman about him. Mrs. Gresham, in fact, had taken one of her prejudices against Mr. Langley.

Two hours after this Ethel was on her way to Talbot Park with all her sketching materials. The sun was shining warmly, there

was little shade along the road, and she was getting tired as she reached the park-gates. It was with quite a last desperate effort that she pushed the large iron gate back on its creaking hinges ; it swung to with a clang as she threw herself down on the grass with her easel beside her. After fanning herself vigorously with her large Leghorn hat—it was at the time when really serviceable hats were worn—she broke forth into a series of ejaculations : “ Oh, dear, how warm it is ! I almost wish I had not come. I wonder what Harriett would say if she saw me giving up in this manner. She would, no doubt, read me a severe moral from the rusty aspect of those gates, and conclude with one of Justin’s horrid aphorisms—’Tis better to wear out than rust out. Justin and Harriett both fling so many copy-book truisms at me, that I am obliged to find refuge in mamma’s sweet assurance that I am quite industrious enough to please her.”

The gates from which Ethel drew a sermon had once been beautiful, although now much injured by time and neglect. They had been brought from Italy by the late Lord Talbot, who had been something of a virtuoso. From these gates, Ethel's eyes wandered across the park. We say park, but it was hardly such ; in the direction which Ethel looked it was more like a wild piece of pasture land, dotted here and there with fine old trees ; portions of the ground had been enclosed in high fences to keep out the deer, and ruthlessly converted into arable land, but it was a sterile or ill-cultivated soil, in which the corn struggled up feebly and thinly. Why Lord Talbot should plough up his beautiful park was a mystery to Ethel, and she asked herself whether he was letting off portions of his ancestral estate for the sake of money? Could it be he was so very poor?

The said owner was crossing at this very minute towards the gates, and Ethel catch-

ing sight of him between the trees felt a little disturbed, for she did not know much of him. Had she been less encumbered with heavy baggage, she might possibly have beaten a hasty retreat. As it was, she tied on her hat, and composed herself, under the notion that he might pass on without seeing her. Lord Talbot, however, was not the man to overlook a lady. He saw and recognized Ethel when still far off, and approaching, made one of his most graceful bows, requesting to know which part of his estate she was going to honour by sketching.

“I see you have all the materials at hand; you must allow me to carry them to the chosen spot.”

As he spoke, he possessed himself of all the traps, and stood waiting by the side of Ethel, whose favour was by this time won. She led the way towards a little dell behind a clump of firs.

“You know, I suppose, Lord Talbot, the little valley over there? I thought it would

make a pretty sketch, and there is a little convenient brook to dip water from. I have a glass with me."

Between the trees, in passing, they saw a glimpse of the old, red-bricked, high-roofed Hall, with its numerous little pointed gables.

Talbot, after looking at it, remarked : " You have never been up to the old house, I think, Miss Gresham, to see the pictures ? It's a dreary place."

" Is it ?" said Ethel. " Harriett does not think so."

" Ah ! how is Harriett, as you call her ?"

" She is very well, and terribly busy. Harriett is always busy. She is so good and unselfish."

" Ah ! you speak charmingly of each other," said Lord Talbot, stroking his moustache, and looking down on the ingenuous girl rather superciliously. " It is beautiful to be so young and frank, and to

have such great friendships; it is almost like a romance."

"Perhaps you think it *is* only a romance?"

"Pardon me. I think of Miss Mayne too well to doubt her truth in anything. But I am envious. *I* have no such friend. Would that I could claim a share in so sweet a friendship. Mine has been a barren life."

Here he waved his hands to the fir trees, as though they had had something to do with it.

"Ah! Lord Talbot," and Ethel scrutinized his face for an instant, half inclined to offer him some sympathy, but she found such a comic twist in his mouth that she broke forth into a ringing laugh; "I don't know what to say to you, but put down the things here, please. I thank you very much for carrying them." And as he bowed, she held out her hand, which he slightly pressed, then turned away.

"Pretty little thing," Talbot thought, as he walked on. Then looking at his watch : "I've time to spare, I may as well give St. Clare the hint. He won't know where to stroll to, and to come across a young lady sketching would just suit his tender fancy."

Ethel had painted industriously for an hour, and after looking at her sketch sideways, upside-down, and at a distance, got tired of it, and began to watch the birds hopping and the deer come down to drink at the stream.

It was about noon ; the coolness and shade were refreshing ; so Ethel, in a sudden fit of weariness, put aside her drawing, and walked down to the edge of the stream. She took off her hat, and lying down on the bank, amused herself by dabbling with her hands in the water, and breaking the reflection of the blue sky above, and the image of her own bright face.

Softly the wind stirred among the trees ; softly the brook gurgled over its stones, and softly came the fancies to the young girl's mind. She began to wish she were a Dryad, or Naiad, and could live ever by the bank of some stream like this, shaded by green trees, and over-arched by a cloudless sky. These were fancies born of very idleness, for Ethel's life was happy enough in itself. There were as yet no gray hues in her sky ; all was bright and pure ; everything conjoined to make her life blissful ; youth, health, beauty, the love of fond parents, the shelter of a peaceful home. To her the past had been so pleasant that she concluded the future must be the same. Ethel and Justin were the only surviving members of a numerous family, for the worn look on Mrs. Gresham's face had its cause, and her only daughter was very dear to her.

She humoured her caprices, and indulged her whims, in a way that would have spoiled any one else ; but Ethel had too true a

nature to be wholly spoilt. Albeit this maternal tenderness had fostered in her something selfish and egotistical; a contracted habit of thought, which centred too much in that little body, Ethel Gresham.

But these were almost all her faults, and they were quite those of a child. She was guileless and trusting, free from vanity, with a profound reverence for all the good and God-like. Whatever alloy circumstances and habits had thrown into her character, there was a basis of pure gold, the substratum of a noble nature.

Justin Gresham was some years older than his sister. He was dear as Ethel to his parents, but did not come under the petting system; he was too stern for that. Besides, for some years he had resided from home, first as a medical student in London, and at present as an assistant in a private lunatic asylum at S——, the study of insanity and its causes being the branch of the profession he more particularly followed.

It was a strange fancy, his friends thought, and Ethel generally explained to inquirers that her brother was a mad-doctor. Ethel did not look far forward into the future. She hoped (as all young girls of eighteen do hope) to marry, some day. She hoped her husband would be some good, kind fellow; that they would live near Maxwell, and keep a pony and chaise; that was the summit of earthly happiness to which her heart aspired. Ethel could not help thinking about Mr. Langley, conning over the little she had heard, and wondering and desiring to know more. "He may be engaged," she said to herself; "but I think Justin would have known it, and have mentioned it; he must be clever, and I think he is good. Ah! if he is all I have ever imagined a man could be, how pleasant it would be never to leave my home, or mamma. But I should like Harriett to marry first; she ought; she is two-and-twenty, and so much more sensible and fit to be married than I am. What fun if

Harriett fell in love with him ! How I would tease her ! I will certainly throw them together, and make up a match." Ethel knew nothing whatever of her sensible friend's foolish liking for Lord Talbot. Young girls do arrange matters very satisfactorily for themselves ; they take it for granted that the hero under consideration will bestow his affections where it is most convenient, and just where they think proper to plan that he should.

Ethel had just reached this part in her romance, when a beautiful swan came sailing down the stream, and seemed to ask, by the haughty, inquiring curve of its neck, "What business have you here, trespassing on my dominions ?" It is well known that swans are very spiteful birds, and this one proved to be no exception, for as it came near Ethel, it commenced hissing and elevating its wings, so that she was forced to take her hands out of the water, and move slowly up the bank. The swan followed,

making a horrible screech, enough to frighten any maiden ; but Ethel was no coward, and threw stones at her assailant ; as it came nearer and nearer to her, she took her hat and flapped it quite bravely, laughing all the time. But suddenly, just as the swan was quite close, and seemed on the point of flying at her, to Ethel's intense surprise, an arm was passed in front of her, and a firm hand, seizing the swan, sent it some distance down the stream. She turned quickly, and saw standing beside her the stranger of the coach. Poor little girl ! she was much embarrassed, and became still more so when St. Clare (for it was he, having acted on Lord Talbot's suggestion) bowed, and said, smiling, " Allow me to introduce myself, Miss Gresham. My name is St. Clare. I am a visitor at the house of our friend, Lord Talbot." Ethel was a little reassured as he went on speaking, for he had a kind, winning voice ; however, she did not yet dare to look up, but stood swing-

ing her torn hat, blushing, and wondering what she ought to say.

“May I not claim, as reward of my services, one smile of good-will?”

Ethel smiled, and murmured, “Thank you;” but without yet daring to look up. St. Clare, noticing her embarrassment, and descrying the sketch lying on the grass, said, “You were sketching, I see. May I look?”

Ethel nodded her head; and, with a deep blush, began to collect together some of her drawing materials.

“One moment before you put your brushes away,” said St. Clare. “I am something of an artist. Might I be allowed to put a few touches to your sketch? It is a bold request.”

“Oh! not at all,” Ethel found courage to say. “Thank you very much, if you will; I know so little of painting.”

“Indeed you have a very fair talent;” which was truth, and not flattery.

St. Clare took from her hands the sketch and brush, and with a few decided touches, soon brought about more of the desired resemblance to nature. Notwithstanding his assumed nonchalance, he was a little nervous at first, but he soon felt at home with a brush in his hand, and grew interested in his work. Ethel silently watched and admired, wondering at the talent which produced so speedily the effect for which she had been labouring above an hour in vain. After a few moments, he looked up, and gazing first at Ethel and then at the scene before him, said, "You and this beautiful sylvan scene make me feel like a poet."

"I must go home," said Ethel, quickly, half-frightened at his odd remarks, and feeling it would not be proper to stay any longer.

"You will permit me to carry your portfolio a little way?"

Ethel assented, and he walked by her side across the park; but when they arrived

at the gates, she somewhat peremptorily bade him good-bye, took her portfolio, and walked on alone.

“If I had met Harriett while I was alone with a strange young man, what should I have done?” she thought; “I was so frightened lest he should go all the way home with me—what an odd fellow!”

St. Clare went back to the stream, and flung himself down beside it, trying to recall the sight that had so pleased him. It was like some pastoral picture of Reynolds or Gainsborough—the young girl, in her unconscious grace, with her blooming face, downcast eyes, and the dark rings of hair on which a sunbeam fell; the little brook, with its broken reflection of blue sky and over-hanging branches, the picturesque grouping of the trees beyond.

It needed these surroundings to make any one entirely pleasing to St. Clare, and the whole scene had, as Talbot conjectured, just touched his “tender fancy.”

There is, to some minds, almost as much in the influence of time and place when they first meet a person, as in the qualities of persons themselves. St. Clare had seen many fairer forms in English ball-rooms ; he had looked on many more glowing faces among the dark-eyed daughters of the South, and the houris of the East ; but these had all seemed as far removed from him as beings from another sphere. Eyes that had glanced most softly on him had left him as they found him, calm and indifferent. His ideal of womanhood was high and pure ; he had never met with a likeness of it until to-day, and now the impassioned feelings of the poet, the ardour of youth, and the long-controlled affections of the man, burst into full flower at once. For there was something in the tuneful breeze, the softly-murmuring stream, the presence beside him of youth and beauty, that seemed like the realization of a half-forgotten dream—an undefinable dream, that had possessed as much

his waking as his sleeping hours—that had come with sudden gleams in the twilight of summer evenings, and had awakened strange yearnings in his soul in the lonely midnight. Then, as his eyes fell on the tree under which she had sat, the longing for realities came over him, and he cried, “When shall I see her again?—how shall I manage it? Perhaps”—with a sudden lucky thought—“she may have left something behind her, a pencil or brush.” And he set to work and searched in the long grass, and there, sure enough, resting against a tuft of heath, was a brush. Now came the question, had he better call at once, or to-morrow, to return it? Prudence suggested to-morrow; but some stronger feeling had carried him half across the park, on his way to Mr. Gresham's, before he had come to a definite resolve.

The ladies were in the drawing-room when Mr. St. Clare called. Being a stranger, he was naturally supposed by the

servant to be a patient; therefore he was shown into a little side-room, known as Mr. Gresham's consulting-room. His card was taken to the doctor in the dining-room, who was indulging in ten minutes' after-dinner nap.

"Dear, dear, Mary, they won't let one have a minute's peace!" Then he took the card from her hand. "Mr. St. Clare; why that was the man Ethel was prattling about at dinner! St. Clare; the name seems familiar to me;" and he got out of his easy-chair, and pushing back his somewhat dishevelled hair from his forehead, went into the consulting-room. The gentlemen bowed to each other; then St. Clare, flushing very much, for he had not expected anything so formidable as an encounter with the doctor, said, "I took the liberty of calling to leave a brush Miss Gresham left behind her this morning; perhaps she has not mentioned her accidental meeting with me—I—I—"

"Oh, yes; she came home full of it,"

said Mr. Gresham, seeing the young man was feeling awkward; and as he really seemed a gentlemanly fellow, and meant no harm, why he kindly put him at his ease. "I gave her a little scolding for being so forward with a stranger; but she is altogether as unsuspicious as a child in these matters. And really, gathering from what she said, that she had had to do with a gentleman, and a friend of our neighbour, Lord Talbot, I could not scold much."

St. Clare bowed his thanks for the implied compliment, and thinking there was no chance of seeing the ladies then, took his hat and prepared to leave.

"Pray sit down a moment," said the doctor; "your face seems familiar to me; I am sure I have met you before somewhere;" and he scrutinized his companion's face with his keen eyes.

St. Clare looked down, and bit his lip; he evidently did not wish to assist the doctor's memory.

"Why, of course," exclaimed Mr. Gresham; "I attended you some years ago at Lord Talbot's, for a slight fever you had; you were quite a youth then. How was it you did not remember me?"

Fortunately for St. Clare, at this moment there came a tap at the door, and on Mr. Gresham crying "Come in," no less a person opened the door than Ethel. When she saw who was there, she stood still, with widely-opened eyes.

Mr. Gresham laughed, and St. Clare, seeing his opportunity, came forward and gave her the brush, explaining how he had found it.

"Come into the drawing-room, and let me introduce you to my wife," said Mr. Gresham, with a sudden cordiality, which he could not account for afterwards. So they all went into the drawing-room, and Mr. St. Clare was made known to Mrs. Gresham. And now, as his every hope seemed to hang on the chance of his ap-

pearing favourably in the eyes of Ethel's parents, his whole being was on the alert. He saw Mrs. Gresham was wrapped up in her daughter, and he praised Ethel's artistic talent ; he saw Mr. Gresham was straightforward and frank, and he met him with the same measure of sincerity and good-will. Altogether, considering he did not possess the Machiavellian genius of his friend, Lord Talbot, he succeeded in gaining the desired end very well, and before he left, had planned to take Miss Gresham out sketching every morning, when the weather was fine. This was arranged with the concurrence of Mrs. Gresham, who was to accompany them.

As St. Clare passed down the garden, he encountered a tall young man. They met on the narrow path, and Langley was obliged to turn on one side to let the other pass ; for a moment their gaze met. St. Clare thought it must be Ethel's brother, and politely raised his hat ; Langley did not return the greeting.

By the time Langley had reached the hall-door he had arrived, by a process unknown to the laws of logic, at the abrupt conclusion that the young man with the fair face and graceful figure was Ethel Gresham's lover.

CHAPTER IV.

"Would you taste the tranquil scene?
Be sure your bosoms be serene,
Devoid of hate, devoid of strife,
Devoid of all that poisons life;
But much it 'vails you in this place
To graft the love of human race."

SHENSTONE.

LATE in the afternoon of the same day, Lord Talbot, returning from an unsatisfactory survey of his little estate, entered the dark-panelled sitting-room before described, in a most discontented frame of mind.

Luncheon had been prepared for himself and Mr. St. Clare, but Lord Talbot, finding his visitor had not yet returned from the excursion in search of Ethel Gresham, muttered something about "Deuced uncivil;" and, leaving the luncheon untasted, he exclaimed :

"I'll go to Harriett. So good-bye to my resolution of three days. But why should not I amuse myself with her? I don't believe she cares for me—at least, I'll go and see—I can't do any longer without her."

Thus thinking, he rose, lighted a cigar, and went into the garden.

It was at that turning-point of the day when the mid-day fierceness begins to subside, and give place to the calm shadows of afternoon. The broad flight of steps leading from the drawing-room windows was strewn by the fallen leaves of a climbing plant that hung in graceful festoons over the back part of the house; the unweeded pathway, the long grass on the wide-spreading lawn, all betokened want of care and attention, or an inadequate staff of gardeners. Among the long grass, beside a fallen statue of Psyche, Talbot caught sight of St. Clare, lying on the sward with his hat over his face.

"Ernest!"

St. Clare started to his feet. "What do you want?"

His friend surveyed him, with a comical smile.

"Day-dreams! day-dreams! Pray how did you thrive in that fair lady's love?"

St. Clare laughed, and, ignoring the question, asked for a cigar.

Talbot handed him his case and a fusee, and St. Clare lit his cigar and puffed away a few moments before he replied.

"I fared most favourably in my undertaking. I found the young lady where you described, and came up at a most opportune moment, when she was about to be attacked by one of those swans. They're spiteful creatures."

"So you rescued her, after the most new and approved style of knight-errantry?"

"Yes; and by another fortunate accident I had the pleasure of seeing her parents, whom I think, from the little I saw of them, very pleasant people."

"'Pon my word, a pretty good step in the course of a few hours. You are braver than I thought you. And what do you think of the young lady now?"

"I think her beautiful!" broke out St. Clare, enthusiastically, forgetting for the moment his friend's cynicism.

"Are you really so far gone as that? To call a little, curly-haired, rosy-cheeked girl beautiful!"

There was something so mocking in Talbot's tone that St. Clare felt he must either meet him in the same spirit of banter or keep his own confidence. He felt too seriously in the matter for the former course, and therefore decided on the latter.

"No, no!" slowly and critically began Talbot, flipping off the ashes of his cigar on to the fallen head of Psyche; "No, not beautiful. You are too excited just at present to judge of the matter rightly; she is pretty and piquante, if you will, but nothing more. Beautiful! I hardly ever knew a

woman to whom that encomium could be truthfully applied, and I flatter myself I am a tolerable authority in such matters. I once knew a Spanish woman, at a French theatre——”

“No doubt,” interrupted St. Clare, impatiently. “I do not wish to discuss the matter—I know one woman whom you once thought beautiful.”

“Isobel?—yes,” assented Talbot, and for a moment he gazed sadly at the broken Psyche at his feet; then shutting his mind against the quick-coming memories the magic name had summoned from the past, he added, carelessly, “We all think those we love beautiful. But a truce to this discussion. I want you to come with me and call on our worthy vicar, Mayne. I really don’t know how to get through the time before dinner; see, we have two hours to spare,” and he held out his watch.

St. Clare was not much in the humour to go and call on strangers. Seeing, however,

that Talbot was dull, and wanted amusement, he put aside his own wishes, and complied with those of his friend. "But I ought to make myself a little more respectable before calling on strangers."

"No, you will do. You have quite the look of a distinguished foreigner. Come along." And linking his arm in St. Clare's, they proceeded by a short cut across the Park, thereby avoiding the village.

They soon arrived at the Parsonage, were ushered into the drawing-room, and left there to themselves a few minutes, before any one came in. St. Clare had the opportunity of observing the room, and judging what sort of people the clergyman's family were likely to prove.

The first glance at the apartment suggested children and disorder—almost synonymous terms. Notwithstanding all Harriett Mayne could do to prevent it, this room *would* get untidy. She was constantly arranging it, and clearing away superfluous

articles ; dusting and wiping off the marks of dirty little feet on the carpet, and dirty little hands on the chairs. Mrs. Mayne could not afford to keep more than two servants—a cook and a nursery-maid ; and Harriett was too active and energetic not to strive, even with the work of her own hands, to keep the place in order. She had, however, been out for an hour when Talbot and St. Clare arrived, and the drawing-room had been thrown into glorious confusion in her absence. The table-cloth had been dragged half off, and thereby a number of books thrown upon the floor ; a chair or two were upset ; there was a torn straw hat on the sofa, and a toy horse and cart stood in the doorway.

After a few minutes' examination of these things, during which Talbot had briefly explained to his friend the state of the household, and hinted at Mrs. Mayne's indolent nature, the door opened, and a tall, red-haired man entered the room. It was



Robert Mayne, vicar of Maxwell. He shook Talbot's hand with unmistakeable cordiality, and bowed with a beaming smile to St. Clare, on his being introduced, "as my particular friend, and the greatest genius of the nineteenth century."

Talbot then inquired, with apparent concern, after the well-being of the whole household, especially Miss Harriett, trusting that she would not overtask her strength with her many onerous duties.

"Harriett is quite well," replied the vicar, drawing a chair towards the table, and before seating himself, replacing the table-cloth and the fallen books, in an unconcerned manner, which showed how accustomed he was to little upsets of the kind. "She is busy just now—more busy than usual, about the fancy-fair and the schools. I was occupied with one or two ladies of the committee when you arrived, in marking the prices on the tickets. This must plead my excuse for having kept you waiting."

While Mr. Mayne is entering into some of the particulars of the approaching bazaar, and the three gentlemen enter into a discussion as to the desirableness of educating the lower classes, we may as well describe the vicar.

Imagine, then, a man about twenty-eight, slightly above the middle height, with limbs so loosely knit together that he has the appearance of an overgrown boy. He walks with huge strides, and stoops and throws his arms about in a most ungainly fashion: when he sits, he sinks into the chair, and his short body is almost lost to sight, whilst his long legs sprawl over the floor. Robert Mayne is a man who has always disregarded appearances, from an utter forgetfulness of his outward self; yet, paradoxical as it may seem, he has a bearing and manner which force on every one the conviction that he is a gentleman, and which always command respect. His gentlemanly nature shines through and illu-

mines, as it were, the whole rough temple, and the spirit in him makes the place where it abides beautiful. He has the same intelligent brown eyes and bright complexion as his sister; his face resembles hers, although the features, cut after the same pattern, seem to have been carved with blunter tools. A cheerful, bright face, beaming with intelligence and good-will; an indomitable, hopeful soul looks straight out at you from the brilliant eyes—a soul that all through life has overcome by circumstances and self, and never has been conscious of the amount of the struggle, the sacrifice, or victory; something irresolute and vacillating at times in trifles, from an easy-going temper that is ever ready to give in or give way to the wishes of others, but firm and persistent in the great purposes of his life—his duties to God, to his parish, and his home.

The argument is becoming quite animated between the three gentlemen, when it is

suddenly checked by the entrance of Mrs. Mayne, bearing in her arm the latest hope of the house, a fine baby, with the family failing distinctly apparent in its little downy head.

Lord Talbot, with the immediate anxiety to please he displays whenever a lady is present, pilots her to the sofa, and arranges the cushions for her ease with a delicate solicitude most gratifying to Mrs. Mayne, who, with a face wreathed in her choicest smiles, reserved only for lords and the friends of lords, flutters down and arranges her skirts.

She is a sickly, genteel-looking woman, with the remains of that insipid prettiness so common among English girls—which prettiness had gained the heart of Robert Mayne some years ago, when he was tutor to her brother, and caused him to make the one false step of his life, by running away with her when she was no more than sixteen. Robert Mayne never discovered that it *was*

a false step, but his wife did. She found no particular fault in her husband, and loved him still in *her way*, frequently making him aware that she considered herself sacrificed, and regretting often the choice that deprived her of the opportunity of allying herself to some member of the aristocracy, or maintaining her original position in that charmed circle.

Mrs. Mayne took a fancy at once to St. Clare's refined and aristocratic face. She felt by instinct he belonged to that high sphere from which she had fallen, and entered forthwith into a friendly conversation, making him her confidant in certain episodes of family history.

The grandeur of her ancestors and the glory of her early home, her father's hot temper, and her mother's early death—anything and everything, however absurd or trivial, is important in Mrs. Mayne's mind, if only it be connected with herself. She does not exactly obtrude these particulars

upon you, but tries to let it appear that you elicited them from her; her mind being completely filled with such thoughts, she cannot fail to disclose them in conversation, and whether the subject be the killing of partridges or the repairing of churches, equally is called forth some reference as to how her uncle, Sir Clavering Cobbs, preserved game, or the manner in which the church adjoining the estate of her uncle, Sir Clavering Cobbs, was decorated.

St. Clare bore very patiently with this rhodomontade, pitying, not scorning, her weakness; pity, indeed, came more naturally to his mind than contempt.

At length her monologue was suddenly stopped by the door being violently burst open, and the eldest of Mrs. Mayne's children, a boy about four years old, rushed into the room in a dirty pinafore, and all the wild disorder likely to fret a mother's pride before visitors, shouting loudly: "Aunt's come home; she's come home,

and now I want my tea." After which expression of his desires, the sturdy little rogue glanced round the room to see whether any of the company reciprocated his feelings, and catching sight of a something in Talbot's eyes that he did not like, he dived under the table and hid himself.

Following more closely into the room came Harriett Mayne. As she entered, she bowed generally to the visitors, overlooked Lord Talbot's proffered hand, and passed on to where her sister-in-law was seated on the sofa.

When Harriett was excited or displeased, there was a hard tone in her voice, and she spoke rapidly. This was perceptible in the few words she now addressed to Mrs. Mayne, who, however, paid very little heed to them; but interrupted her to whisper an urgent question. To which Harriett made the brief answer of "Do as you please. I will order tea on the lawn, then." And quickly recrossing the room, she passed out

before Talbot could reach the door to open it for her.

Mrs. Mayne's urgent question to Harriett was to the purport of asking Lord Talbot and his friend to remain to tea; and when Harriett had left the room, she, with many smiles and round-about phrases, invited them to partake of their quiet meal.

Talbot appeared to regard the proposition favourably, and consulted St. Clare, who was agreeable to anything. He looked at his watch, and declared the dinner could wait. He should be most happy to ruralize in Mr. Mayne's delightful garden.

They were soon all seated round the homely, hospitable table, under the shade of the spreading ash, and appeared generally well pleased.

Harriett headed the table, and superintended the tea-tray, for Mrs. Mayne never did anything she could get another person to do for her.

It was a pleasant evening. The warm

breeze blew softly, stirring gently and monotonously the trailing boughs of the ash, and causing a rustling sound, as when the waves of a quiet sea sweep back from a pebbly shore.

The sun sank into his rest, smiling and content, as though conscious of a well-spent day.

There was peace in all external nature, but disquiet in most of the hearts in this small circle; at least, there was peace in Mr. Mayne's heart, as, having finished his tea, he pushed his cup farther from him, and leaning back placidly, viewed the group at his table, and the pretty garden, where bloomed the fuchsias of his own planting and training, and where bright beds of verbena and geranium sparkled on the lawn. White Provence and damask roses grew near, and made the evening air heavy with scent. Beyond the laurels that bordered the road were some yew-trees, and the gray-towered church, round which flew the

sparrows, chirping their last good-night. The vicar's eldest boy leant against his knee, half asleep; his wife was smiling, and, as he fancied, happy; his guests apparently contented,—whichever way he looked, the world seemed blessed to him, and life as calm and sweet as the summer evening.

How different are our temperaments! All this time in Mrs. Mayne's mind there smouldered a fretful regret that she was not in the position she thought she ought to be, or rather (for discontented people are slow to accuse themselves) that the circumstances and people around her were not what she wished.

St. Clare had his own trouble, that made his young face so often grave; and Harriett Mayne was never quite easy in her mind when Lord Talbot was present. The latter, perhaps, was enjoying himself the best, for he had found what he wanted the whole long, listless day—an interest and an ex-

citement ; something to study, examine, and experiment upon. We do not think he wished just now any other pleasure than that afforded him by watching Harriett's stern face and averted eyes. She betrayed the restlessness of her mind through her outward calmness and indifference by the one little nervous trick of playing with the sugar-tongs.

"I'm not going to let it go on like this," said Talbot to himself, getting after a while a little weary of his diversion, and requiring a change ; "she shall give up those sugar-tongs and look at me. I like to see her shy, fawn-like eyes, and the fine quiver of the delicate lips when she addresses me."

So he moved from where he was sitting, and took possession of an empty chair beside her.

"Miss Mayne !"

As he anticipated, she relinquished the sugar-tongs, and turned her head round slowly, inquiring, "Another cup ?"

"No, thank you. I have one or two matters to speak confidentially to you about."

"Indeed!" she replied, still with provoking apathy.

"Firstly," and he lowered his voice, "are you aware that your young friend, Miss Gresham, sketched in the park to-day, and I, discovering her, sent my romantic artist, Mr. St. Clare, in her direction? They encountered; and from all I can find out from him (for he is somewhat reserved on the point), they seem in a fair way of falling desperately in love with each other."

"Nonsense!"

"Hush! not so loud. I do not wish him to overhear us. But do not oppose my plans, for I know you have great influence with the young lady, and I really wish it; they would suit each other admirably."

"You appear to take a very sudden interest in the young people. I was not

aware that to your other accomplishments you added that of a match-maker!"

"Only promise me to be on my side," he continued, not heeding her reply.

"I!" said Harriett, raising her eyebrows—"I never interfere in love-affairs! But in this, as there is such disparity of rank, there can be no need to interfere; it must all end in flirtation."

"I don't see it," replied Talbot. "Love overleaps these barriers. You know what Bulwer makes Lord Hastings say of Sybil—she that is fair, gentle, and loving, is fit mate for a king."

"And I also know what Bulwer makes Hastings *do*," answered Harriett, without looking up—"prove false to his word!"

"Ah!" softly said his lordship; "when will you be less severe, and think better of human nature, Miss Mayne? But to return. There are reasons (I speak confidentially and earnestly) why his friends—he has no relations—would not object to

his choice, even if she were not quite his equal in mere worldly position."

Lord Talbot did not give his reasons; but he thought: "Few parents in high life, where Ernest's secret is generally known, but would object to their girls marrying him. Poor fellow! a lucky thing for him to marry the doctor's pretty little daughter. I shall encourage it as far as I can. I think his heart is touched, by the dreamy way he is gazing at the sky."

Harriett had been sitting very calmly, with her hands clasped on her lap, pondering over Talbot's last words—about love overleaping the barriers of position, and wondering whether he meant anything or nothing by them. She turned on him, when he next addressed her, a pair of brown eyes, lit up at length with warm interest, and he knew he had gained her full attention. Presently there was a pause, and they could hear Mr. Mayne and St. Clare talking of shooting.

"The farmers complain dreadfully of the number of rabbits from your estate over-running their corn," said the vicar, turning to Lord Talbot.

"Come and take a day's shooting, then, Mayne. I never was much of a sportsman."

"Ah! thank you. If I were different, and could spare the time, how much I should like it," replied the clergyman, stretching his long legs. "What a shot Justin is."

"Who is Justin?"

"Dr. Gresham's only son," replied Harriett.

"Ah! I remember him; the brother of your dear friend and confidante."

"The same, my lord!"

There was something so chilling in Harriett's manner that it forbade further inquiry, and caused Lord Talbot to wish her a rather more hurried and distant "good night" than he had intended.

CHAPTER V.

"Actions, looks, words, steps, form the alphabet by which you may spell characters."—*Lavater*.

"YOU are fond of paintings, Miss Gresham?"

"Yes, very. But I have not seen many."

"While I have seen the best pictures all over the world," said St. Clare, in a tone of regret. "It seems as though I had nothing more to see. Ah! I wish I could show you some of those grand old masters; how you would enjoy them!" He pictured to himself Ethel's admiring eyes and unaffected exclamations of delight. "Of course you have seen the picture-gallery at Talbot Hall?" he asked.

"No. I have never been there since I was a little girl, and papa sometimes took

me to see Lady Talbot. She was a dear old lady, and petted me terribly. I think she regretted having no daughters of her own. I should like to see the pictures though, some day, if mamma would let me."

"I will undertake to persuade Mrs. Gresham. I do not think she will be very hard and unyielding.

"No," returned Ethel. "She is a dear, good mother, and will do anything to please me."

This conversation took place between master and pupil during the second drawing-lesson, in the little nook by the stream. The previous day had been a failure. The weather had been cloudy and threatening all the morning, but Ethel, in her new enthusiasm, joined to St. Clare's persuasions, had overruled all Mrs. Gresham's objections, and they had started. They were no sooner settled than a heavy summer shower poured down, and they were obliged to hasten

home ; not, however, before getting thoroughly wet through. To-day it was brilliantly fine, and the sketch was progressing rapidly. Mrs. Gresham sat on her camp-stool at a little distance, plying busy knitting-needles ; this was what she designated her "company work," being an intricate and wonderful pattern, a puzzle to Ethel, and oftentimes a bewilderment to herself. If we follow the course of Mrs. Gresham's reflections, we shall find her very busily weaving a romance for the future, in which the crowning scene consists of Ethel hand-in-hand with St. Clare, while Mrs. Gresham leads the blushing pair to the feet of her astonished husband. Farther than this she never got on clearly ; great inconsistencies arose ; she wished to unite a long engagement, which might keep her daughter for a time at home, with all the delights of a marriage. Of course she must part with her child sooner or later, she said to herself ; it was selfish to keep her always. " I

must find out more about the young man ; what are his connexions, and who he is. I should think he is rich ; there is certainly no doubt of his gentle blood. Dear me ! one, two, three, knit two together ; I have made some mistake. Ah, I see ; the two together comes first. I hope the young man does not live far away. I must not have Ethel separated from me ; if they could take a nice cosy little house in the neighbourhood ! I hope they won't forget to give poor Trill his dinner ; servants are not always kind to dogs. Well ! young birds must fly away ; 'tis but natural, and certainly he appears all that the most anxious mother could desire." And she glanced again with a smile at the two sketchers.

St. Clare's fair head was bent down over the dark curls, those wilful curls which were always getting in the way, sometimes falling over the sketch and being tipped with green. He was very happy, very content ; it seemed

joy enough to him if these sketching-lessons would but go on for ever. But Ethel did not appear so joyous and careless to-day ; she was constrained and silent, and sighed often ; presently she laid her brush down wearily, saying :

“ I cannot go on any longer, I am so tired.”

“ Indeed ! why we have only been an hour.”

“ Oh, but I have such a headache. I have had it all the time.” And here Ethel whispered, “ Mr. St. Clare, I was so naughty and obstinate about coming yesterday, and now I shall suffer for it. I feel I have caught a cold, my throat is so sore.”

“ Oh, Miss Gresham ! why did you not mention this before ? ” cried St. Clare, with a look of concern on his face. “ Let us go back at once.” And he hastily gathered up the sketching materials.

“ You see,” said Ethel, with tears in her eyes, “ it is not a common cold I mind, but

this horrible fever that is so much about comes on with a sore throat—”

“ Good heavens ! ” interrupted St. Clare, starting : “ I would not have had this happen for—for— ” and he hesitated with such an expression of consternation on his face that Ethel smiled, to re-assure him.

“ Oh, it may all turn out nothing. Don't alarm mamma. I will tell her when we get home, ” she said.

Mrs. Gresham being acquainted with their wish to return, took up her camp-stool and her knitting, and walked a little behind the young people ; she did not desire to interrupt their conversation. She was also just then very busy in deciding a troublesome point in her own romance. If St. Clare became her son-in-law, and lived in London, or perhaps on his estate—no doubt, he had an estate—would Justin take his father's practice, and would Mr. Gresham consent to leave Maxwell ?

It must not be supposed from Mrs. Gres-

ham's day-dreams, that she possessed the feeling or talent of a match-maker ; she was neither so worldly nor so diplomatic ; she was simply a romancer, constantly weaving a plot for her daughter now she had ceased to weave one for herself. Young girls must dream, say the wiseacres ; and so must middle-aged married women, say we.

When they arrived at home, and were seated in the pretty little drawing-room, Mrs. Gresham, with her usual hospitality, produced cake and wine for her visitor's refreshment. Ethel, however, refused everything, and taking off her hat, threw herself down wearily on the sofa, hiding her head among the cushions.

" Why, Ethel, this is your favourite Madeira cake ; do have a little piece." And then, as she turned and looked towards the sofa, she exclaimed : " My child, you are not well. How flushed you look."

Ethel flushed still more. " Oh, mamma,

I am ashamed to tell you, because it was all my obstinacy yesterday. I would go——”

“ Miss Gresham fears she has caught a cold from her wetting,” put in St. Clare, in an apologetic manner. “ I am so grieved I persuaded you at all.”

“ I wonder' if your papa is at home ? ” And Mrs. Gresham left the room to ascertain.

“ Then I can do nothing for you, Miss Gresham ? ” said St. Clare, sorrowfully. “ How I wish I were a doctor ! How I envy Mr. Langley. Isn't that the name of your father's assistant ? ”

“ Yes. But why envy him ? ”

“ Oh ! he will be——” but here St. Clare was interrupted by Mrs. Gresham, who entered with the young man in question.

“ Papa is not in, Ethel, so Mr. Langley will kindly attend to you.”

“ Oh ! it is nothing but a cold, mamma. It is not worth so much fuss.” And Ethel, with a half-frightened air, looked up from her cushions.

"Mamma," said Ethel, after Mr. Langley had left the room, "do you like Mr. St. Clare?"

"Yes, my love, very much."

"Don't you think he is a little too romantic, sometimes?"

"Well," replied Mrs. Gresham, meditatively, "you see, he is naturally poetical and clever; besides which, we have not been accustomed to the society of young men of that sort, and his manners, although perfectly gentlemanly, may sometimes appear a little strange to us."

Ethel lay quite still for a few minutes, pondering over her mother's words; then, with a restless movement of her head, she asked, quickly:

"Mamma, you do not think for a minute he wants to make love to me?"

"Why, my little girl is growing quite vain!" replied the mother; and coming to the back of the sofa, she took the curly head between her hands, and patted her cheeks.

"Oh, no, mamma, no ! but if it were so it would mar all the freedom of our intercourse. I should never feel at my ease. But I should think the difference of our position would preclude any notion of that sort, so I shall make my mind easy."

"Do, my love," said Mrs. Gresham, and again patted her daughter's cheeks, smiling to herself meanwhile.

So Ethel was persuaded by her mother, early in the afternoon, to betake herself to bed.

Ethel's was a charming little bedroom, with a dainty white bed, pictures on the walls, flowers in the windows, and furnished with all the pretty knicknacks a mother's fond care and thought could suggest.

She had the dog to play with, and her mother to talk to and pity her, and "Evangeline" to read. Yet, with all this, Ethel was restless and unhappy ; she was anxious to get well, that she might go out and resume her painting-lessons, and be certain

of attending the bazaar, that she seemed determined to be discontented with everything.

Just when she was beginning to feel the climax of her weariness, a relief came in the person of Harriett Mayne. Friends are more than ever friends when they come at the right moment, and raise our drooping spirits by their kind looks and tones.

Ethel received Harriett with open arms, as she had so much to tell her about St. Clare and the sketching. Ethel was greatly surprised to hear Harriett had already seen this hero, but it made it doubly pleasant.

Now, when two young girls bring forward a young man as the subject of their conversation, the criticism is minute and searching; nothing is omitted; hair, features, complexion, gait, voice, and manners are all carefully and lengthily commented upon. A verdict for or against is given; approval or dislike expressed; and all is done with the same earnestness of purpose and careful

investigation as learned professors exhibit when examining a new philosophical theory.

Besides, Harriett had seen St. Clare; that was a great point; so they fell to work with vigour, and agreed in their opinions of him until Harriett summed him up as "gentlemanly and clever."

"Still there is a dreamy purposelessness about him I cannot reconcile with my idea of a man," Harriett remarked. "He is rather a dawdler through life, I should think."

"Ah! that is the misfortune of his being independent," Ethel replied. "I dare say if he had been poor he would have made a name for himself by this time as an artist."

"Why should he not do so now?"

"I suppose the impetus is wanting. I don't think I should feel inclined to work, were I in his place."

Their conversation was here interrupted by Mrs. Gresham bringing up Ethel's tea.

“ You will come down, Harriett, and take a cup ? ” inquired Mrs. Gresham ; “ although I dare say you have already had tea. Here’s a time of day ! nearly eight o’clock, before my husband comes in. I waited to-day for him, because we have some ffeed cakes Mrs. Cowlard, the farmer’s wife, sent us. There ! don’t marry doctors, either of you ! ”

“ Oh ! but I am going to send Harriett down, on purpose to look at Mr. Langley, ” said Ethel, roguishly glancing at her friend. “ Is he in, mamma ? ”

“ I think so. ”

Then Harriett went downstairs with Mrs. Gresham. She looked forward with curiosity to see “ Justin’s friend, ” and her first impression was certainly disappointing. He was introduced, bowed, and then quietly took his place. That bow was not like Talbot’s or St. Clare’s ; the very way he moved was wanting in the polished ease of a man who is perfectly self-possessed. She

thought he seemed a little heavy and sheepish, altogether different from what she had expected ; she had anticipated reserve and lack of beauty, but this odd, apathetic manner puzzled her as it had at first puzzled Ethel and Mrs. Gresham.

“ This is Robert’s elder sister,” said Mrs. Gresham, addressing Langley, and nodding at Harriett. “ She is quite one of our own family. I dare say you have often heard of her.”

“ Yes, often,” replied Langley, glancing up at her with his shy eyes. Then he sat down and fell to work vigorously on a cold round of beef.

Harriett thought he might have said something more cordial, and not begun eating in that boorish way. She did not guess how hungry he was, or that he had had nothing since early morning.

No. Martin Langley was not prepossessing at first sight, but when you knew him well, and forgot his half-shy way, you might

find a pleasantness, almost a quiet charm, about his appearance.

It is very strange, the predilections we take for some persons, the prejudices against others, often without any sufficient cause.

Ethel had discovered this pleasantness soon, and she already esteemed and liked Mr. Langley very much. Why, she knew not, and never asked herself; it might be because he was her brother's great friend, or because he was alone among them, or because her mother did not seem quite amiably inclined towards him.

With her subtle woman's instinct, she understood Langley better than any one else, except her brother. She was not astonished at her father's trust in him; she discerned at once his placid strength of character, the energy and judgment lying dormant in his nature, to be used when required, but not wasted over the nothings and trifles of everyday life. She saw through that self-depreciative manner; knew he thought him-

self of no consequence and often got treated accordingly ; but she foresaw that people would respect him in time, when something had occurred to stir the depths of his character, and show his power and ability. At present, he did not force himself forward into the good opinion of the world, and the world did not care to force its good opinion on him.

CHAPTER VI.

"Fowle jealousy ! that turnest love divine
To joyless dread, and mak'st the longing heart
With hateful thoughts to languish and to pine,
And feed itself with self-consuming smart,
Of all the passions in the mind thou vilest art."

SPENSER.

WHEN Harriett was going, to the astonishment of all, Mr. Langley got his hat and offered to see her home ; neither Mrs. Gresham, Harriett, nor Ethel had deemed him so gallant. Harriett said there was no necessity for him to come, as she was accustomed to walk alone after dark, but, as he pressed the point, she acceded, rather pleased to have a *tête-à-tête* with Justin's friend. When they started, she was struck to see how he towered above her. To her surprise, he offered her his arm, for she had regarded him as a very shy young man, and was naturally amazed at his matter-of-course

air in performing this act of politeness. She had expected he would drag along by her side and say nothing. Her astonishment was again excited when, after taking his arm, he bent his head towards her so as to see her face, and inquired, in measured accents :

“ So you are Harriett Mayne—the vicar’s elder sister ? ”

“ Yes. Are you surprised at his friendship for me ? ”

“ Nay.”

“ Well, then, I can say, so you are Martin Langley—Justin’s great friend ? ”

“ And *you are* surprised at his choosing me.”

“ I ! why should I be ? ”

“ Ah ! do not deny it. I observed it at your first glance, when I entered the room. It said, as plainly as looks could say, ‘ What a lout ! ’ ”

Harriett laughed and contradicted him, although she thought to herself : “ He has

more discernment than I gave him credit for."

After a minute's silence, she said: "I admire you for your frankness. Do you think you will like Maxwell?—what you have seen of its people?"

"Yes, well enough. I can make myself contented anywhere; besides, Mr. and Mrs. Gresham make it quite like a home for me. I think Miss Gresham said you had a letter from Justin,—may I ask the news it contains?"

"Certainly. I would show it to you, with pleasure, but that he requested me not even to let Ethel see it. He complains of being rather out of health and spirits, and I think he fears it coming to his mother's ears; she is so very anxious."

"I am surprised at *his* being low-spirited. Something must be the matter. Did he say he should be coming home soon?"

"He said he might shortly run down for a day or two."

Then they both relapsed into silence.

They were now passing through the one long street of which the principal part of the town was comprised. It was a sultry, oppressive evening, with dark clouds obscuring the moon; there was little light, save from the shop-windows, gas being but a recent addition to Maxwell, lighted only on winter nights. The people were standing at their doors, glad to get a little air; the men smoking, and the women, with their aprons over their heads, chatting in groups together.

Harriett and Langley passed down the High Street, and came in sight of a large, new public-house. It stood out into the street, and threw the glare of its many lights far before it. It was a new importation to Maxwell, and a great eye-sore to Mr. Mayne; for he found the attractions of its brilliant bar, green and gold walls, spruce barmaid, and music-hall, had lured many a respectable, home-staying man to spend

time and money there ; curiosity drew them first, and, having once gone, they found so many diversions that they went again and often.

There had been nothing like it before in Maxwell. There had only been the old-fashioned public-houses and beer-shops, meagre and dirty enough, where the people went for their beer ; and the one grand hotel, " The George," where the farmers dined on market-days, and met once a fortnight to discuss crops, cattle, prices, and politics, over their ale and grog. The Maxwellians were not proof against this gaudy gin-palace ; and, to the sorrow or disgust of the clergyman, the doctor, and the more respectable tradesmen, it flourished abundantly, and seemed likely to be a fixture in the town.

When Langley and Harriett came near this house, they saw a large crowd in the street, and heard shouts and screams ; they hastened forward with one accord.

"What is this?" asked Harriett, of some of the outsiders of the crowd.

"Sure, it's a fight, Miss Mayne," respectfully replied a rough-looking labourer, who knew her.

"What is it about? Are they drunk?"

"One wor, I should say; but lor, miss, you can't do no good; you'd better go away; they must fight it out."

But Harriett had no such intention. She turned to Langley, who had been also making inquiries. "What shall we do, Mr. Langley?"

"Stop it, if we can." And Langley elbowed his way through the crowd. Harriett followed close, holding with one hand to his arm. The people fell back a little as they recognized the parson's sister, whom nearly everyone knew and nearly all respected. Still, it was a rough scene, and Langley turned once and expostulated with Harriett. "Really, you had better not come, I think."

"Never mind me ; I have no fear, and I may do some good," she replied, firmly.

In the centre of the crowd a clear space was kept, in which two men were fighting desperately. The observers, both men and women, stood round, enjoying the sport, the men with their hands in their pockets, puffing at their pipes, the women with aprons over their heads, gesticulating and crying at intervals. One woman had thrown herself on the ground, moaning ; she was the wife of one of the combatants ; as Langley and Harriett came near her, she raised her head, and, recognizing the latter, clung to her gown, crying :

"Oh, sure, they're killing of my own husband! Och ! dear angel, save him, for it's my own wicked fault."

"Is it you, Mary Burrows ?" exclaimed Harriett, with severity ; but she extended a hand to the woman, and raised her to her feet. Just then, one of the combatants was felled to the ground, and the con-

queror was about to strike a finishing blow, when the wife, with an Irish howl, flung herself between them : " Sure, you shall kill me first ! "

Harriett, too, came between them, but the man, enraged by drink and fighting, had no sense left. " Move out of the way, or I'll serve you out too," he cried, with a brutal oath. Harriett did not stir ; she was quite fearless ; she only shivered at his profane words. His hand was raised, when, with a well-planted blow from his powerful arm, Langley felled the man to the ground, saying, " I'll teach you, you cowardly brute, how to insult a lady."

The crowd applauded—crowds always applaud chivalry, especially when it is successful.

" Take that fellow away, some of you," said Langley, authoritatively, pointing to the fallen hero, and he was obeyed, as a man with a strong will and powerful arm generally is. But some of them felt in-

clined to resent this interruption to their amusement.

"Who is he?" was whispered curiously among the crowd.

"Why, the new doctor, to be sure."

"Then we'd better be civil, or he'll poison us all," suggested a wag. The joke spread, and laughter with it, and the crowd was soon restored to good-humour.

In the meantime Langley was attending the injured man, who lay unconscious on the ground, with blood-stained hands and face. His wife only moaned and cried in the most unsatisfactory manner, bitterly denouncing herself as the cause of the quarrel and fight.

After a time, Langley obtained sufficient order to get him carried to his home, Harriett and Mary Burrows following, with a few officious, bewailing neighbours, who had already discussed the probable widowhood and wake.

Their abode was a little way out of the

town, on the road to Talbot Hall ; it was a ruinous house, once of some size and importance, but the roof had fallen in, and the windows had fallen out. They entered at the shattered doorway ; all was darkness save where the moon shone in through a broken casement, and revealed a barn-like room, with bare walls and floor.

As they were going in, Mary Burrows roused herself a little, and turning to Harriett, said :

“Sure and you'd better not come in, miss, for the two childer has got the fever.”

“Never mind, Mary.” And Harriett followed her in. “But how came you to leave them, if they are ill ?”

The woman only shook her head, and turned from Harriett to strike a light. The bed was occupied by the two sick children, so there was nothing for it but to lay the man on the floor. Langley felt his pulse, loosened his clothes, and pronounced there

was no danger. He would come round in a few minutes, then he went to the restless, wailing children in the bed. This seemed a more alarming case, for he looked very serious, and called Harriett to his side.

"This is very wretched, Miss Mayne. How is it word was not sent to us of this case? It ought to have been attended to before."

"Why, the woman is a Catholic, and will not seek help from any of us. The husband used to be a decent man, but lately they have seemed to go all wrong. I have come to see them once or twice, but she has been so sullen and ungrateful that it has driven me away."

"Something must be done for these poor children."

Langley directed one of the men, who had carried Burrows in, to go to Mr. Gresham with a slip of paper and fetch certain medicines.

Harriett went over and spoke to Mary, who sat on the floor with her husband's head in her lap. Her long black hair had fallen loose on her shoulders, and formed a half veil to the wild, beautiful face that was raised to the clergyman's daughter; the dark eyes were streaming with tears, the full red lips parted, and the bronzed cheek pale from agitation. What a contrast was the child of tempestuous passions, and, it was to be feared, of sin, to the pure, stately maiden who stood before her, stooping from her height of knowledge and goodness, striving to raise this ignorant, wilful being by compassion and tenderness to the level of their common womanhood!

She was relating in broken sentences, and with many sobs, the cause of the riot. It appeared that she had not agreed well with her husband lately; he had been morose and cruel, and taken to drink, and to be late home at night; the cause, she supposed, was that an old lover of hers,

named O'Connell, had lately returned to Maxwell from the gold diggings; he had realized a considerable fortune, and had been much disappointed to find her married. He was squandering his money recklessly, treating all his old comrades, and once or twice had treated her—bought her a smart shawl. That evening she was on her way to the chemist's to procure some medicine for her sick children when she encountered O'Connell, who persuaded her to go into the public-house and take something to drink. Burrows happened to come in for his evening's beer, and had found her with his rival. He reproached her in no very measured language, and she, infuriated at his suspicions, had, with the taunting tongue of woman, remarked it had been far better for her if she had married O'Connell—he would never have treated her thus. At this, Burrows raised his hand to strike her; O'Connell interfered, and they adjourned to the street to have it out.

When she arrived at this part of her narration, her husband's eyes slowly opened, and on recognizing her, he endeavoured to raise his head, and move from her encircling arms.

"Oh! you wouldn't go away from your own wife!" she cried.

"You're a fine wife, you are," muttered the man.

"Ye hear him, Miss Mayne," she began, in a shrill tone; when Harriett, seeing that she was winding herself up for a burst of fiery eloquence, quickly interposed, and laying her hand on the woman's shoulder, and drawing her on one side, whispered:

"Say no more, Mary. Take my advice, and ask him to forgive you."

"Forgive *me*. Why, he's the one as ought to ask for forgiveness."

"Yes, I know that, Mary. He has been very wrong, but you have been very foolish. Your conduct was enough to provoke his jealousy. He will never be the first to

make it up—it is not likely ; and there is no knowing how easily you may make matters all right by two little words, ‘ Forgive me,’ and then kiss him.”

Harriett went over to Langley's side, and the wife stooped over her husband.

CHAPTER VII.

“How vain a word, how small a pause,
May break the music of our lives;
Had we turned that way, or said this
On such a day, our after life had worn
Another hue.”—MITCH.

THE long-looked-for Saturday arrived, but unfortunately the weather proved most inauspicious, for it rained incessantly. The children at the vicarage had been watching at the windows for an hour or two without perceiving the least cessation of the steady down-pour ; but with the strong hopefulness of children, they remained persistently flattening their noses against the glass, and gazing at the leaden sky.

Harriett was anxious. She feared the rain might keep away many purchasers from the bazaar ; but still, in all probability, it would clear up later in the day ; she must

try and be as hopeful as the boys. About ten o'clock there was a slight improvement, and the children hailed it with loud shouts of glee : rushing to their aunt, they begged for their best hats, to start at once.

She told them to go and announce the change to their papa.

Mr. Mayne was accordingly routed out of his study by his peremptory sons, and assailed by a torrent of unintelligible sentences, the meaning of which was that they wished to be carried across High Street to the bazaar, not to get their "toos and tottings dirty."

Mr. Mayne put his hands over his ears, and escaped to the dining-room, the two boys shouting at his heels.

Mrs. Mayne had just come down stairs ; she was seated in the rocking-chair, with a shawl over her shoulders, looking shivery and miserable, grumbling at the day, and the damp, and everything in existence.

As her tall, boisterous husband, and his

two boisterous boys, rushed into the room, for the moment she positively disliked him; disliked him for his bright face and cheerful aspect; for the ease with which he threw aside his troubles, and the merry zeal with which he carried out any pleasant plan: she put her hand to her forehead, and plaintively whispered, "Those dreadful boys will be the death of me."

"Oh no, they won't, my love; you are not going to die in such a hurry;" and he bent down to kiss her; but she pushed his face away, and spoke with a rising petulance in her voice.

"It's just like you, Robert; you are so horribly unfeeling. I am sure, ill as I am——"

"Why, dearest, I had no idea you were ill. You did not say so this morning."

Nor indeed had Mrs. Mayne known it until she arose, and saw what a rainy morning it was, and had to relinquish all idea of appearing at the bazaar in a new silk which

had been purchased for the occasion. She was determined not to go without it, so the conclusion she came to was not to go at all.

"I am always ill!" replied Mrs. Mayne, severely, in answer to his last question; "only you are so wrapped up in anything and everything but your poor wife, that you never see it."

"Dear me! I am very sorry. Do be quiet, boys!" One was impatiently tugging at his hand, to draw his attention; the other had mounted, by the aid of a chair, on to his back. "Herbert and Charley, go to Aunt Harriett, and ask her to brush your hair and make you ready."

This was enough; the boys scampered out of the room in a moment.

"Do shut the door, Robert; there's such a horrible draught." Mr. Mayne calmly obeyed. "I really never saw such ill-bred little creatures as those two boys," continued Mrs. Mayne.

Then she shivered, and drew her shawl

tighter over her shoulders, rocking herself to and fro.

"You might send them to school, Robert."

"You know, my love, I cannot afford it. I really think you have not much trouble with them. Harriett so very kindly does all she can. I don't know how we shall ever be grateful enough to her."

"Ugh!" exclaimed his wife, with a toss; "you can always praise her. I'm sure if you only knew the contempt with which she treats me——"

Mr. Mayne was silent for a moment, and then said, soothingly—anxious, apparently, to change the conversation—

"I sent round to order a fly this morning, but they are all engaged up to three o'clock; if it clears up at all, dearest, I will come round and fetch you. You see, I must go."

Just then the boys came in, very smart and tidy; and Mr. Mayne lifted them up,

one on each shoulder, and passed into the hall, where he found Harriett and the servant, both laden with large parcels. Thus equipped, they proceeded to the Town Hall, in a room of which the bazaar was arranged to take place.

The apartment was of good size, and in tolerable condition, being the room in which the county balls were held whenever the quiet people of Maxwell aroused themselves to plan such gaiety: this was not often; and it was more generally used for lectures and concerts, and religious meetings, whenever any clerical lion prowled in that direction. The principal ornament of the room was a full-sized portrait of the late mayor. This was hung over the mantelpiece, and the eye perceived it first on entering the room. The mayor had been a little, ugly man, with a large, handsome waistcoat (on which you saw the artist had expended the full force of his genius); the background was gracefully decorated by a Corinthian

column and crimson draperies, held apart by Cupids (supposed to be a delicate reference to the melancholy fact that the mayor's offspring all died young). Between the curtains was a peep of a mountain, a waterfall, and a Swiss chalet. The mayor had never been to Switzerland, but the artist had, and evidently wished the fact made known.

When Harriett and Mr. Mayne arrived, they found all the busy and bustling ladies of the neighbourhood, who had braved the inclement weather, fully occupied in looping up festoons of evergreens and impossible paper roses. Harriett was immediately besieged by some of her friends and Sunday-school teachers, pious and prattling young ladies, who begged for her advice and assistance in arranging their stalls: she was always something of a leader wherever she went, and folks had a way of relying upon her in any difficulty or emergency.

Herbert and Charley were kissed, and

petted, and taken completely away from Harriett's care; they were now in their glory, and did all manner of mischief, talking in an incomprehensible manner to those around them.

Mr. Mayne shook hands with all, laughed, chatted, and made himself generally useful and agreeable. Every one inquired after "poor dear Mrs. Mayne," and expressed great commiseration on hearing of her indisposition; she was pitied by all as much as her husband was liked.

"My dear Miss Mayne," said a stout, flurried old lady, "this rain!—this terrible rain!—no one will come; nothing will be bought, and the school will never be built!"

Harriett had no sooner cheered this faint-hearted lady by a few words of hope, when another eager voice cried, "Harriett, dear! I have nothing but worked braces—positively nothing. Do change some of your goods with me; may I take these pen-wipers

and slippers?" Harriett nodded assent, and dismissed that applicant.

"Harriett!" exclaimed another voice. This time Harriett turned with a bright smile to greet the new-comer, for it was Mrs. Gresham.

"Ethel has not come, then? Well, I hardly expected her; she will not be so disappointed, as it is such a miserable day. How did you get here? Are you wet?"

"No, thank you; not at all. Mr. Gresham drove me in the chaise. What with shawls and umbrellas, I have managed to keep dry."

"How is Ethel?"

"Perhaps a little better, but still far from well. However, she ate a very good breakfast, and was just getting up when I left. I begged Mr. Langley to watch her pulse, and if there were the slightest symptom of fever to send for me."

"It was very kind of you, Mrs. Gresham, to come in Ethel's stead. Will you take

this stall? It is not far from mine, and I can help you if you are in any difficulty. Will Mr. Gresham be able to look in upon us?"

"Yes; he told me he should make a point of coming. He has now gone his rounds, and will call as he comes back again."

"You have brought the picture; it is really very pretty. I wonder who will buy it? I dare say Mr. Gresham will?"

Mrs. Gresham nodded significantly, and began to arrange the articles at her stall.

The arrangements were not completed when twelve o'clock arrived, the hour fixed for the admission of the public. As the clock struck the doors were thrown open—to the rain, for there was nothing else to enter.

For an hour no one came, nothing was done; the ladies and a few privileged brothers, who were present, condoled with each other; even flirtation flagged, such

was the dreary effect produced by the weather.

Those who had been so busy all the morning now became, as was natural, very hungry, and commenced an onslaught on the meagre provisions supplied at the refreshment-stall; they found, however, but small stay in three-cornered tarts, iced creams, and fancy biscuits. At this juncture, Mrs. Gresham drew Harriett aside, with a look of friendly meaning. "My dear, do not, let me beg of you, touch any of that unwholesome pastry; I never thought much of Doughson's pastry. Now, I have brought a little basket of provisions with me; I know what these places are, so I thought I would bring something substantial—a nice chicken and a few slices of ham; if we could slip away into the reading-room, we might have a snug little luncheon, and it would prepare us for the long afternoon's fatigue."

Mr. Mayne and the boys were called.

The former came ; but Herbert was then deep in the mystery of Banbury cakes, and refused to change his diet for anything less attractive, while little Charley had already eaten more than was expedient, and was cross and sleepy.

Harriett and her brother consulted together as to what was to be done with these refractory boys. Harriett proposed sending them home, but as there was a yell from the children at the notion, and murmurs of consternation from some of the young ladies, they were permitted to remain, under the condition that they would be good, and eat no more. Mr. Mayne, after refreshing himself with Mrs. Gresham's provisions, put on his waterproof coat, and prepared to depart to a farm-house some two miles distant, where he knew he should be expected by a sick person ; and, as he said to himself, " a little rain will not be so disagreeable to me as disappointment to one who has no other change than my visits."

After his departure more visitors arrived, and towards three o'clock the rooms were becoming tolerably full. Business and chatter were getting brisk, the stall-keepers had their hands full, and Harriett, whose stall was one of the largest, and most elegantly furnished, had almost more to do than she could manage. Nevertheless, in every pause of conversation, or interval of purchasers, she found time to glance round the room in search of one tall figure, and every time she looked hope became fainter. In spite of her resolutions, she felt terribly disappointed; all the noise and merriment oppressed her as wearisome, the laughter sounded heartless, the smiles she fancied must be forced. Why were all unconcerned and cheerful, and she alone weighed down with a sense of despondency? Even Mrs. Gresham had entered into the spirit of the scene, and had seemingly forgotten her darling at home. How was it every one shook off their troubles like an uneasy

burden and she could not get free of hers ? Ah, well ! and she tried to shake it all off with a deep sigh ; then she pushed back her hair, and drew herself up, with a determination not to be borne down by this grief. Just then her eyes happened to glance at the door, where, to her surprise, and that of everyone who noticed it, Mrs. Mayne entered, leaning on the arm of Lord Talbot.

Harriett bent her head again, and busied herself with the knicknacks on her table ; she felt the blush upon her cheek, the joyful beating of her heart.

It appeared that Talbot, with his usual attention to the ladies, and with the particular courtesy which, for some reason of his own, he thought well to show to Mrs. Mayne, had called for that lady in his carriage. She, with a flutter of delight, had arrayed herself speedily in the new silk, and now entered in a sunshine of smiles, whispering to Lord Talbot " It was like old times, when my dear uncle, Sir

Clavering Cobbs, always gave me his arm ; it is like being in one's natural element." Talbot bowed, and thought to himself the element alluded to might be the rain. Was all this kindness to the clergyman's wife his sympathy for her delicate health ? or was it a desire to curry favour with Mr. Mayne's parishioners ? Was it because his vanity was pleased by her admiration ? or was it that he wished to appear gentle and considerate before Harriett ? We think it was a mixture of all these motives prompted his conduct ; but the springs of action in the human heart are so involved and complicated that we fear to name any one of them as the sole cause.

St. Clare came in with them. His graceful bearing and prepossessing face caused some curiosity among the female portion of the assembly, who inquired of their cousins and brothers : " Who is he ? " " Who can he be ? " " Who is that particularly handsome young man just come

in?" These inquiries caused the cousins and brothers to utter such disparaging remarks on the stranger as "Effeminate," "Absurdly long hair," "Some little foreign monkey, with his capering airs and graces." St. Clare, the unconscious subject of these hostile remarks, came blandly forward to Mrs. Gresham's stall. There was a momentary cloud upon his brow when he heard Ethel would not be there at all; but he cleared it off, and endeavoured to make himself useful and agreeable to the mother of his beloved.

A shadow fell over an anti-macassar Harriett Mayne was busy in spreading out on her stall, that its intricate pattern might be better perceived. That tall, slender figure she had been watching for so anxiously was now leaning over her; but she did not look up, and pretended to be unconscious of any one's proximity.

"Miss Mayne!"

"Yes."

“ Good morning. Will you accept these as a peace-offering ? ” and he laid on her table a bouquet of white roses.

“ Thank you. What need, though, for a peace-offering ? I have not been angry with you, and am obliged to you for bringing Mrs. Mayne here. I am most glad to see her.”

“ Then you are *most* glad to see Mrs. Mayne ? ”

“ Bandyng words, Lord Talbot, is useless and unprofitable when there is real business to attend to. What will you purchase of me ? ”

“ I—buy anything ! ” he exclaimed, with affected astonishment. “ No ; it is enough that I sanction the affair with my presence, without so far betraying my faith as to encourage a Protestant charity. I should be obliged to undergo penance for a fortnight for such terrible heresy.”

“ There are no other motives, then ? ” inquired Harriett—“ no pecuniary considera-

tions?" She seemed more at her ease, and said this with a smile.

"Cruel! do you deride my poverty?"

"Most decidedly I do; have you not brought it on yourself?"

"Partly. I have been, as many others, the sport of circumstances. How many evils we fall into unconsciously!"

"No," said Harriett, "do not deceive yourself. Do you know what Richter says? 'Not circumstances, but I, am to blame for my sufferings.'"

"Very probably," he assented, with a shrug. "A very plausible philosophy, but is it true? I put it to you as a matter of personal experience. Do *you* ever blame yourself for your sufferings?"

"Often."

"But not generally?"

"Not always; but still I know I am the cause of most of my troubles."

"What is all this I hear about philosophy and Richter?" said St. Clare, coming

over from Mrs. Gresham's stall. "I was quite startled to hear such words in a conversation between Talbot and a lady—it is not generally the way he talks. How do you do, Miss Mayne? What shall I purchase of you? I am resigned to empty my purse before I leave."

"Yes, Miss Mayne, St. Clare is a very good victim. He is rich and lavish."

"Let me have these braces, will you?" asked St. Clare.

"No," returned Talbot, "I won't let you have them if Miss Mayne has worked them. Have you?"

"No; I have not," she replied.

"There, then, you may have them," said Talbot, handing them over.

St. Clare took them, and quietly put down a sovereign.

"Rather expensive, St. Clare."

"Not at all. I consider them cheap, after having been so far honoured as to pass through Miss Mayne's hands." He

bowed and passed to another stall, to have his pockets charmingly picked again.

"A pretty fellow! isn't he, Harriett? Lots of pretty speeches?"

Talbot was lolling across the table as he said this, toying with and touching everything with those slender, twitching fingers. Something in his action and tone offended Harriett, and she said, haughtily, "I wish you would be so kind as to leave the things alone, my lord, and make your sarcastic observations elsewhere. I cannot get any custom while you are lounging here."

"Is this the way you summarily dismiss me, when I have come through all this pouring rain to see you, and have faced all the rude staring of these vulgar people?"

"You had better return to your own circle, then. You will be more appreciated there than here. Although one would think you were pretty much at home here—rather too much so, I think, my lord."

"If you say 'my lord' again, Harriett, I'll tear to pieces every bit of trumpery on this table!"

She looked up to him, and her eyes flashed. "You had better not."

"I like you best when you are fierce, my queen."

She smiled; she could not be angry with him. "Do go away now, please, for you are seriously annoying me. You know how the people chatter here; there are Mrs. McGrundy and her daughter just behind you; they have been watching us for this half-hour."

"Indeed! I was not aware I was so much honoured," he replied, turning round and fixing his eye-glass leisurely in his eye. "I had better go and buy something of them, Harriett." He lounged across, and purchased an elaborate smoking-cap, and this act completely mollified the ladies, and dispersed the storm of scandal prepared for poor Harriet—more especially as he went

about with the smoking-cap on his head for the remainder of his stay there.

Harriett was left in peace for half an hour, then again the soft voice came and whispered in her ear, "I have come again; I have remained away as long as I could. Now, I will buy what you will."

Now Harriett had a particular purse which she herself had worked with many thoughts of Talbot, and conjectures in many a lonely hour as to whether it would ever fall into his hands. She had kept it hidden, so that no one else should buy it; she produced it, balancing it across her fingers. Talbot took it up, examined it minutely, then said, "It is not much use to me, if I have nothing to put in it. Have you nothing better? The gold beads will wear rusty, the purple silk fade."

"I can give you nothing that will not wear out in time, Lord Talbot."

There came to his lips the words, "Give me yourself, then;" words he had often

thought of saying, and at times wished to say, as much for the interest he would feel in watching how she would look as for any other reason. Not that he was sure whether he cared if she said "yes" or "no," but he knew he should enjoy the way she said it, whatever it might be ; the dramatic effect would be fine, he thought.

CHAPTER VIII.

“She had the low voice of your English dames;
Unused, it seems, to need rise half a note
To catch attention,—and their quiet mood,
As if they lived too high above the earth
For that to put them out in anything;
So gentle, because, verily, so proud.”

E. B. BROWNING.

THE words upon Lord Talbot's lips at the close of the last chapter were not spoken; had they been, the whole course of this history would have been changed. Those words, or words to that effect, always came to Harriett a little too late—but we must not forestall: if the reader be in a hurry, he can look at the end of the story. The end of the story! How often we wish that in our own lives we could peep into the third volume! Yet, would it be advisable? No; on every ground decidedly not. If disappointment is to attend us, if all things are to occur altogether differently

from what we desire and plan, by the time they come to pass we shall, perhaps, see their fitness. If Harriett could that day have beheld herself and her circumstances a year thence, she would have been disgusted and dismayed. Yet on the corresponding day of the following year, she was perfectly contented and happy.

While the words "Give me yourself" were in Lord Talbot's mind—when they were almost on his lips, a lady, who had approached to his side unperceived, lightly touched his arm. He turned round impatiently, and the face before him was so unexpected that he was aroused from his usual assumed indifference, and started perceptibly, exclaiming :

"What! you here?"

"Yes, cousin Harry, I am here. And why not? Pray, is your surprise caused from the fact of its being a wet day?"

"I thought you were in Yorkshire."

"So I was," replied the lady; "but it

was so dull there that I was bored to death. Therefore I ran up to stay a few weeks with the Leslies. I heard there was a bazaar here to-day, and I thought I should meet you, but I could not persuade any of them to come with me, for they are Roman Catholics. Ah! by the bye, so are you—at least, so that handsome father-confessor of theirs affirms. What a clever rogue he is! I thought I should startle you, and it is something to startle Lord Talbot! Well, here I am. Can you not find me a seat, and do the honours of Maxwell? Introduce me to the clergyman, mercers, and all the big-wigs of the place. But first let us get into some quiet corner and have a chat together. I have much to say to you.”

Lord Talbot having found a chair, and Mrs. Romilly—for that was his cousin's name—having seated herself, it becomes our duty, as faithful narrators, to give the reader some idea of her appearance.

She is what you would call, at first

sight, a dashing woman. Not by that would we imply a tall, forcible woman, or that she was masculine, but that she was handsome, well-bred, well-dressed, and fashionable. Just enough colour, and just enough nose, her eyes neither small nor large; no fault could be found with her mouth, and criticism fell harmless upon her figure. Combining with these attractions an easy fortune, and the agreeable self-possession of a widow of thirty, you would think her just the sort of woman to please Henry Talbot; yet, for some cause, he now appeared ill at ease, and wished his charming cousin safely back in Yorkshire.

“Do you know, you rude creature,” continued she, with imperturbable good-humour, not heeding his evident embarrassment, “I have been here half an hour, watching you lean over that stall, and puzzling my poor brains as to what you can find so interesting in that red-haired gawk of a girl? Pray, who is she?”

"That red-haired girl is a particular friend of mine, Mrs. Romilly," and he winced beneath the widow's bright, searching eye.

"Ah! you incorrigible flirt. I thought you never had any particular lady-friends now. When will you reform, Henry? You are getting quite old-bachelor-looking. What a strange mixture you have here. Who is that brisk little man over there, just come in? The doctor, Mr. Gresham? Ah! I have heard of him. Attends the Leslies—clever man. But that fair-haired young man—how like—surely it is not poor——"

"Hush!" cried Talbot. "Pray don't mention his name; he has changed it. Some one might overhear you."

"Changed his name! How extraordinary. I thought he was dead; we have seen nothing of him for so long."

"The truth is, family circumstances were so awkward that he thought it better to

keep himself out of the way. England has been a place of such misery to him ; he will not long remain here. He is now staying a few weeks with me. He calls himself St. Clare, his second name, and his mother's family name. Do not forget—St. Clare."

"Poor fellow!" said Mrs. Romilly, with a sigh of commiseration. "He never quite recovered his sister's death, I believe—a painful subject *still*, Henry? Well, I am not jealous *now*." And there was an awkward pause, while an expression of deeper feeling than was usual with her passed over the lady's bright face. "What do you do to amuse yourself? I hear you have become quite a recluse—renounced the gay world. That vain Father Petre considers it all through his influence and advice, but I question myself whether it is from taste or expediency."

Talbot shrugged his shoulders, and said :
"Both. As for my diversions, I have but

few. I walk over my estate, smoke, read the newspaper. Sometimes I have up poor old Somers, my unfortunate steward, butler, man-of-all-work, and begin to go over accounts. I get disgusted, curse my evil fortune, and dismiss him."

Mrs. Romilly laughed—not loudly, neither was it a simper, but quite a drawing-room laugh—one that always came in the right place, and when it did come, disclosed some very pearly teeth.

"I perceive," said Talbot, "that you have discarded your weeds."

"I couldn't help it. The Leslies are gay people, and see a good deal of company, and I thought it would be a little *outré*. Besides, it is more than a year since I lost poor dear Mr. Romilly." She sighed and looked down. Another motive Mrs. Romilly omitted to name to her cousin was, that her widow's caps were beginning to wear her hair.

"Will you come over and dine with me

one day next week ?" asked Talbot, yielding to an emotion of cousinly kindness. "I will ask the Leslies and Seveli, and get Mayne to come up ; it will be fun to see them together."

"Do you think it will be quite the thing to ask them to meet ?"

"Oh, yes. Seveli is too well-bred, and Mayne too good-natured, for any unpleasantness to occur. Do you think Thursday next will suit the Leslies ?"

"Can you not ride over to-morrow and ask them yourself, Harry ?"

Talbot demurred for a moment ; then a remark which his cousin made about his not being able to tear himself from Maxwell for a few hours even, caused him to yield to her proposal. Mrs. Romilly soon after this took her leave, having previously purchased a pair of slippers at Mrs. Gresham's stall. Talbot avoided Harriett's table, avoided looking in her direction until he had seen his cousin safely into the Les-

lies' carriage, which was waiting outside. As he handed her in, she whispered :

“ Good-bye, Harry. I shall see you to-morrow, then—and take care. Whatever you do, don't make a *mésalliance*.”

Talbot smiled derisively, and shrugged his shoulders, with an expression of innocent surprise ; but as he walked back to the bazaar he bit his lip, and felt the horrible conviction that he had been read off by the discerning widow as easily as if he were a large-type novel. He was annoyed ; he had been foiled by his own weapons ; he felt angry with himself, with Harriett even, and did not go near her again for the rest of the day.

Mrs. Romilly drew down the carriage blinds when she was alone, and said to herself :

“ Strange, is it not ? I have a certain feeling for him still. I thought, after all these years, it would have died within me ; but no ; did I not feel a spasm of jealousy

when I noticed his attention to that red-haired girl? Bah! I will conquer him yet. If I can only get that wily priest over to my side, all will go well."

Mr. Gresham was inquiring of his wife who was the fashionable lady who had just left the room; she had explained to his satisfaction, when Mr. Mayne returned, very wet. The big, good-natured clergyman and the little peremptory doctor were very glad to see each other, and shook hands heartily. These two men had natures opposed in nearly every respect; their temperaments were different. The doctor, with his sturdy set little figure, keen brown eyes, square forehead, and small mouth, his closely-buttoned coat and clean boots, presented a strong contrast to the clergyman, who stood, shuffling from one foot to another, leaning one hand on the back of a chair, from which hung his dripping hat. His overcoat unbuttoned, and with his damp tie and disordered hair, he looked the very picture

of untidiness ; he did not appear conscious of his own defects, but was regarding the assembled company with a bland smile expanding his good-tempered mouth.

This very contrast only heightened, if it did not in part give rise to, the sincere liking and admiration they had for each other.

“Did you hear of that disgraceful, drunken row among the Irish the other night, Mayne ?”

“No.”

“These Irish are always in mischief,” continued the doctor, with some severity. “You must look to this sort of thing, Mayne—the parson’s part comes first ; he has to try to keep the people out of the doctor’s hands. You ought to behave as though you owed a grudge against me, and wanted to ruin my practice. A great step would be to clear away some of the public-houses, and get reading-rooms and wash-houses built in their place.”

"All that I want to do," replied Mr. Mayne; "but I find great difficulties in the way. You know, as well as I do, people, in the aggregate, won't read; and won't wash either, if they can help it."

"True," said the doctor, "they crave for excitement, and they will get it somehow. Even if they don't fight themselves they like to see others fight, while the sober like to see a good hearty drunkard now and then, if it be only something to laugh over and flatter their own sobriety."

"Well, well," said the patient clergyman, "I have hopes Maxwell may do well yet, but it's uphill work."

St. Clare had approached during the last remarks, and now addressed himself to Mr. Gresham.

"I am glad to hear what you say about the reading-rooms, sir; it always appears to me that the great thing we want, to improve the poor, is to give them better opportunities of gaining sound information and

knowledge. Surely they must eventually learn the right, and do it?"

Mr. Gresham pursed up his mouth, ejaculating :

"Humph! Perhaps; but I am not so sure about their always doing the right thing."

"Why not, Mr. Gresham? Do you not suppose we have all the same tendencies and capacities; that a poor man's mind is the same as that of another's?"

"Quite true, young man. I am not going to deny that we are all 'men and brothers'; but I maintain that you, or I, or Mr. Mayne here, if left ignorant and degraded, struggling for our daily bread all our lives, would not be very easily refined or cultivated by having books suddenly thrust into our hands; by hearing a lecture now and then about education, and being patted on the back by our betters, and told we had intellects as good as theirs."

"But we do not leave them in a state of

ignorance and degradation," mildly suggested the clergyman. "I am sure, from three or four years old, we try to give them instruction. Harriett knows how we labour in the schools; but as soon as they begin to know what they are being taught, and can at all comprehend it, they leave us, go into service or to work, get beyond our influence, and soon shake off all their good impressions. I sometimes meet some of our old pupils on Sunday morning, smartly dressed, going out for a holiday, instead of coming to church. They walk along on the opposite side, and pretend they do not see me. This is very painful. It discourages us in our efforts for their good, and makes us feel how comparatively useless is all we can do."

"Not all useless, my dear sir," says the hopeful little doctor. "Early religious training never is quite thrown away; it holds a certain influence over a person all his days; and you and I, who stand so

often by death-beds, have seen its effects there."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Mayne. "I agree with you, some good remains still, if we could keep up the interest of our young men and women, if we could give them something to think about. Schools for adults will not answer; men who are at physical labour all day have no energy for mental labour at night."

"Of course not," declared Mr. Gresham. "Nature can't stand the strain. If, now, in any way, we could combine amusement and instruction—insinuate a wholesome medicine into the jam."

"Would not lectures be of some use?" inquired St. Clare, who had been attentively listening to the conversation of the two gentlemen.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mayne. "But who could we get to lecture? We cannot bring professional men from London without paying enormously for them, and whatever di-

version is provided must be free of expense. The people won't pay for other amusement when they can get all they want at the public-house."

"Are there not any clever men in the neighbourhood willing to give gratuitous lectures?" suggested St. Clare. "It does not require so very much talent to speak common sense to a few people."

"Why, here is Mayne," said the doctor, "gives us two capital theological lectures every Sunday. If we could get any one who could be as entertaining and instructive on a secular subject, it might succeed."

St. Clare looked at the ground for a minute or two; then, not without a certain amount of hesitation, began: "If you could get any one to join me, I should be glad to do anything useful. I do not know about my powers, but you may depend on my will."

"Well said, young man," exclaimed Mr. Gresham, giving him a hearty slap on the

back. "I am delighted to see so much good-feeling in you. I fancied you were too much of a butterfly to like work of any sort."

St. Clare coloured faintly, and replied, rather haughtily, "Circumstances may have been such as to leave a man's desire for usefulness dormant."

The two elder men were too considerate to point out to St. Clare the many demands to do good his position and abilities made upon him, which demands he had not hitherto perceived; perhaps he had not wished to perceive them. This was the first time he had reflected as to how his talents might be applied to some practical use for the benefit of others; being of a generous nature, he had been ever ready to give money, but his time he had spent in vague dreams about a future that the world might attain to if *all men* would do their part towards its perfection. While waiting for all men to fulfil this idea, it never struck him to begin to do his part. May not the new love just awakened in his

heart have widened his affection and sympathy for all his fellow-beings, and brought into existence a more active wish for personal usefulness ?

The two gentlemen did not wish to discourage the young disciple by any remarks on his past inactivity ; they did nothing to damp his enthusiasm, but proceeded at once to discuss ways and means for the furtherance of his scheme.

“ I wonder if Langley would be able to do anything of the kind,” said Mr. Gresham, considering the matter in his own mind ; but he recalled his assistant's fits of nervousness, and dismissed the notion. “ No, no, I fear not. If we could get Justin over for a day or two, Mayne—” But the clergyman was not attending. His attention was fixed elsewhere. He had been for some time abstractedly gazing on the pattern of a shawl, worn by a lady, at the other end of the room, whose back was towards him. This lady, suddenly turning,

disclosed to his astonished eyes, his wife's face, all smiles and animation. She was pleased and contented just then, and something of her lost prettiness returned to her, reminding her husband of the long ago days when he fell in love. He left the two to their discussion, and went over to his wife. He was delighted to see her there, and grateful to Lord Talbot for bringing her; giving her his arm, he walked about the room and chatted to his parishioners. He had long ago forgotten the angry disturbance of the morning, was totally oblivious of the many troubles of his lot; and, with his wife on his arm and his friends about him, there could not be a blither man than Robert Mayne, the poor vicar of Maxwell.

The rain had ceased. There were actually something like faint sunbeams shining in at the window and over the gay scene. Faint as they were, they enlivened the aspect of things generally, and made the anticipation of a walk home more agreeable.

When St. Clare went to say "Good-bye" to Mrs. Gresham, he found that lady very hot and tired, and regretting that she had been persuaded into accepting an invitation of Mrs. Mayne's to return with them and take tea at the parsonage ; she was anxious to go home and see if Ethel were any better. St. Clare asked if he might be allowed to call on his way home, and inquire how she was. Mrs. Gresham thought he had better not. If Ethel saw him, and talked much, it would excite and unsettle her.

"No, thank you. Mr. Langley will, I am sure, take care of her."

"Who is Mr. Langley ?" inquired St. Clare.

"Do you not know ? He is Mr. Gresham's assistant, and an intimate friend of my son's. A very worthy young man. He resides with us. Surely, you must have seen him."

"Of course ! I remember now," replied

St. Clare. "I saw him the day Miss Gresham was taken ill."

While St. Clare was talking to Mrs. Gresham, Talbot had been inviting Mr. and Mrs. Mayne to a "friendly dinner on Thursday next."

"Only to meet my cousin, and Mr. and Mrs. Leslie. I hope, Mrs. Mayne, you will be well enough to come. I trust, also, Miss Mayne will be prevailed upon to join us." As Miss Mayne was just then at the other end of the room, her brother answered for her, that no doubt she would be happy to come with them. So it was settled, and Talbot and St. Clare took their leave. Harriett felt a pang of disappointment when next she looked round the room, and found that tall slender figure was no longer there. She took her roses home with her, and placed them in a vase in her own room. She did not care to put them in the sitting-room, to be gazed upon and smelt by every one. She treasured them more from a

foolish contradictory feeling ; because he had been cold to her, she would not prize them less. All night the room was filled with their soft, faint odour ; it scented her dreams, and when she awoke in the morning the perfume made her first thoughts a memory of the giver of the flowers.

Years afterwards the scent of white roses would turn Harriett faint for a moment, and make her feel again that old pain at her heart.

CHAPTER IX.

"Not chance, but I am to blame for my sufferings. It were a miracle if none befel thee; look for their coming, therefore; each day make thyself sure of many."

JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

WE all find disappointment hard to bear, but those find it hardest who are naturally impetuous, and whose lives have been all pleasantness and peace, unshadowed by the pains and trials that educate the heart to patience. Our little Ethel had led a most untroubled life. Cherished and sheltered by fond arms from the slightest blast of sorrow, she had been the object of devotion and watchfulness to all her circle; one to be loved, fondled, and kept in a warm atmosphere of indulgence; from whom no sacrifice was expected in return. That she should smile and be happy was all her parents desired. It is a wonder the little

maiden was not altogether spoilt, or pampered into capriciousness or selfishness. A little capricious she was at times; it is true, but only with the whims of a child; she was not guilty of deliberate selfishness. There had been no call as yet on the latent strength or nobility of her character; but it will be seen by and by that the power of self-sacrifice was in her, although now she grieved over the trivial disappointment of not going to the bazaar in a manner that may lead the reader to consider her weak-minded. But there are excuses for her. In the monotonous life they led at Maxwell, any meeting of the chief people of the village and its neighbourhood was a great excitement, and she had long looked forward to, and counted on this gaiety. We cannot call upon our resolution to help us to bear with resignation petty trials. At least, we don't. There is no serious lesson enforced by a spoiled picnic on a rainy day. We cannot say we see the hand of God in this;

yet it is there. No doubt, this is the reason why we endure great afflictions so much more resignedly and quietly than the slight crossings of our humour. We murmur at small provocations, while we are silent, if not patient, under a crushing blow. Why do we not try and recognize the same Providence guiding the trifling events of every day which we see distinctly in the grand crises of our lives? It would have been better for Ethel had she been able thus to philosophize, or had she at least learnt to control the expression of her dissatisfaction; then Martin Langley might not have found her, when he came into the dining-room about five o'clock, with traces of tears upon her cheeks, and her whole expression dull and dispirited. She had buried herself in her father's large arm-chair, and hardly looked up when he entered the room. Langley may have been over-sensitive, but this indifference chilled him. He was sorry also to see Ethel grieve over such a trifle ;

he had expected something better of her. All day he had been in the midst of real distress and grief, he had witnessed many an aspect of sickness and of poverty—had seen many a brave struggle, many a brave resistance to despair, over which, had he had the time, he could have shed tears. With all this in his mind, the contrast struck him as he came in from the dreary, out-door world—the contrast between sentimental tears and real sorrow. “A piano, an easel, and plenty of books,” he said to himself. “Pity some people have nothing to do.” He walked to the window, and turned his back on Ethel, muttering, “Spoiled, spoiled.”

Langley never reasoned five minutes about anything which brought him to a harsh conclusion, without finding his indulgent disposition asserting its sway and tempering his judgment. “Ethel is but a child,” he thought. “It is not her fault if her parents have humoured her into self-

indulgence. Besides, I cannot judge of the amount of disappointment she feels. I must try and cheer her up a little, poor child!" So he asked if he should ring for tea, and, as Ethel readily assented, did so. Requesting her to give him the keys, he made the tea himself, and drew a small table to Ethel's side. Then, as he observed her shivering, he said she ought to have a fire; accordingly, the fire was laid. He then insisted on lighting it himself, as he had a method of his own for making it burn up quickly.

Ethel began to be diverted from her own thoughts as she watched him busying himself for her; she took a vivid interest in the gradual brightening of the fire, and actually laughed at Langley's attitude, kneeling on the rug, with tongs in hand, intent on his occupation.

So by the time they sat down to tea, she was her merry self again, and chatted away with her usual volubility.

"You are happy again now, Miss Gresham," he remarked, as he got up and coaxingly poked his fire.

"Oh! yes," she replied, "I know you thought me very babyish. I saw that by the way you walked to the window when you came in. I know I am foolish, very foolish." The tears were gathering in her eyes as she spoke. "I have no strength of mind; none whatever."

"That is unfortunate, considering the pains you take to cultivate it."

"Now, don't be sarcastic; but tell me how can I cultivate a thing I have not got?"

"Every one has some. Besides, I saw the other day that you possessed firmness, by the way you managed your father's frisky pony, and terrified your mother."

"Well, Mr. Langley, how am I to learn self-control?" she asked, half-coyly.

"Do not grieve over trifles."

"But I cannot help it; they are not

trifles to me ; they are the serious trials of my existence. What shall I do when I am disappointed, and feel inclined to be dull ?”

“ Set to work hard at something ; get a book, and fix your attention on it, or force yourself to practise or to draw ; it will no doubt be difficult at first, but you will get accustomed to it.”

“ I will remember what you tell me ; but shall I lose any real feeling by this repression ?”

“ Just the contrary,” he replied. “ Perhaps you may not grieve over yourself so much ; you will avoid useless fretting, enervating to mind and body ; but controlling emotion only makes it more powerful.”

They sat silent for some time after this ; tea was finished ; the servant came in and cleared the things away, and they were left once more in perfect quietness. The fire now and then flared up with a sudden noise, the wind sometimes beat the rain against the

windows, but all else was still. Martin Langley revelled in this peace ; he sat before the fire, his hands on his knees, his head bending forward, and a smile about his mouth ; he felt happy just then, more at home than he had ever been since his residence with the Greshams. Any one who knew him well, and could decipher the language of that inexpressive face, would have told he was happy, by that same smile lighting up his whole visage, and imparting a peculiar attractiveness to his otherwise plain features.

This one of our heroes was naturally of a calm, contented nature ; satisfied with the measure of pleasantness falling to his share each day, accepting and enjoying it ; not leaving it unappropriated, as many do, because of the possible or probable misery in the future ; he bore also with each day's measure of trouble, without having the load lightened by anticipated pleasure in the future. He was not a hopeful man ; he lived

in the present, joyed in the present, suffered in the present, worked in the present, without carelessness or indifference, but in trust and resignation, he left the "to be" to take care of itself.

Ethel, as she leaned back in her arm-chair beside the fire, her little body nearly hidden in its depths, watched his face, her thoughts, after travelling hither and thither, far and near, always converged to this one point—she took it and its owner altogether into her consideration, and appeared satisfied with the subject of her reflections.

"It is very funny our sitting here together, saying nothing to each other," she thought, after some time spent in silence. "Mr. Langley," she said, "I like the poem very much, you so kindly lent me to read."

"Ah! I am glad you did. Have you finished it?"

"Yes; I could not sleep last night, so I lighted a candle and read it. I wanted to

know when Evangeline met her lover. I rather scamped over the tale until I came to it ; but I was so disappointed : what a dismal ending it is to all their trials ! I like people to be married comfortably at the end of a story."

Langley smiled gravely. " Well, you see, it would have been much worse had she found him married to some one else. I like the end ; it is dreary, but natural. But why dreary ?" and he spoke half to himself. " She was satisfied ; she looked into his eyes ; she knew his faith was firm as her own. ' Gabriel, oh ! my beloved ! ' " Langley whispered this quotation ; then checked himself, and was silent ; he had slid unawares into talking sentiment, and quoting poetry.

" Do you believe in love like that ?" asked Ethel, after a pause, during which she had been reflecting upon the sudden light that came into his eyes when he last spoke, the emotion diffusing momentary

beauty over his face. He did not answer her at once; certain old-fashioned ideas he had about the sanctity of love made the question somewhat distasteful to him.

"Perhaps I am not a qualified judge in such matters," he replied, rather curtly.

"Then I will ask you about friendship. How is it you and Justin became such close friends? He never would tell me. I often asked him, but he would shuffle me off with some excuse. I feel assured there is something romantic about the affair."

"Nothing much, Miss Gresham. The principal romance was his generosity towards me. I was poor, and he shared his all with me. The praise of the action was all his, therefore he did not speak of it. It is very easy to love when we are grateful; it is also easy to love those to whom we are kind."

This is all Langley would tell; but as we are intimately conversant with certain events so important in their two lives, we will at

once give a more detailed account to the reader.

Some three or four years previously, Martin Langley and Justin Gresham were students together at Guy's Hospital. For some time, however, their acquaintance was but slight, amounting to no more than a friendly nod or a few remarks now and then; still, notwithstanding that they knew so little of each other, there was a mutual respect and liking between them, when an incident took place, throwing them at once into the closest intimacy.

We have as yet said little or nothing of Martin Langley's early history; he would himself not think it worth narrating at all. What could there be in a life where there were no remarkable events to narrate, no extraordinary deeds to tell, no precocity of intellect to surprise, and no astounding ambition to dazzle? It was a flat, uninteresting existence, the externals of which could be summed up in a few words; indeed,

what excitement could there be in the life of a man who was no hero ?

Martin Langley's parents were poor, and he was their only son ; he had four sisters younger than himself. The poverty in which he was brought up had a most beneficial effect upon him. It is good to be accustomed from childhood to spare living and shabby clothes, to hard study and little pleasure ; to find amusement in simple, inexpensive things ; to be thoughtful and prudent when richer boys are still playing with toys in the nursery ! Circumstances such as these often make men calculating and over-ambitious, but it had not that effect on Martin, who had a great deal more heart than head. Had it not been that he was the eldest, and looked up to and depended upon by the four sisters, and pressed on by the urgency of their small means, he would have been content to, figuratively, sit in the dusthole all his life. He was a big-hearted boy, rather lazy and lumbering, and given

to sit dreamily for hours before the fire, or out in the sunshine, doing nothing. But the sisters did not suffer this; they domineered over him, urged him, and worried him into activity and usefulness. One of the sisters, his youngest and favourite, was a great invalid, and Martin was as much her nurse as any of the others: he carried her about, read to her, played with her, planned little amusements for her, and bore with her tenderly when the rest of the family were driven nearly frantic by her murmurings and irritability. He was always placid, always gentle.

Thus the years passed on; Martin attending a public school, and, with industry and perseverance, acquiring a good education. He was fifteen when his youngest sister died, and then fell on Martin his first deep sorrow. It was a dreadful grief to him, and crushed the hope and joy out of him for some time. It was long before he got over it; indeed, it was doubtful whether he ever did quite,

for there was left in his nature a quietness and seriousness, an absence of youthful light-heartedness and mirth, which made him sadder and wiser than most boys of his years. But the Scripture saith, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth."

Martin had a rich uncle engaged in trade, who had offered to take him into his business. During his sister's illness, however, and subsequently to her death, the young man's thoughts had been drawn in a different direction, and had culminated in a determination, by some means or other, to enter the medical profession. Knowing the dogged nature of their son, his parents after a short struggle allowed him to have his way. Martin, though poor, had an independent spirit, and keenly did he feel that for a time he must of necessity be a burden upon his parents; yet did he bravely resolve that that burden should be as light as possible. He obtained cheap lodgings in an out-of-the-way street, in

order that he might hide himself from his fellow-students, who spared not their remarks upon his well-worn coat and shabby hat. Where he dined was a puzzle to his landlady, and if ever she had the opportunity of seeing him eat, he appeared to do it like a half-starved animal. Even from his own family, stinging taunts as to his needy condition, and the handsome income he might have received from his uncle, occasionally assailed his ears. But he heeded them only for a moment, and true to his strong principles, found consolation in hard work. Luckily for Martin, his constitution was, like his principles, fitted to bear a heavy strain. One of Martin's great difficulties was to obtain the medical books necessary for the right prosecution of his studies. They were expensive, and he had no money. What could he do? The last resort of poverty only was open to him, and although the thoughts of entering a pawn-shop at first made his cheek burn,

and his heart sink within him, yet after a brief struggle within himself, he determined to part with his watch and chain. These were the gift of his uncle.

“It will be only for a time,” said he to himself, “and until I can redeem them, I must conceal the fact from all my friends. I can keep my coat buttoned to hide my naked waistcoat, and take care always to know the time without having occasion to look at my watch.”

Thus muttering to himself, he reached the pawnbroker's, and after glancing nervously round, slunk in through a little side-door, with feelings very near akin to those of Macbeth stealing upon Duncan ; that is to say, he felt at the moment as if he were about to commit some great crime which was to disgrace him for ever. The transaction was soon completed, and buttoning up his coat, and trying hard to assume an erect and independent attitude, he again slunk out into the street.

He had walked a few paces towards home, when he suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder, and, looking round, found Justin Gresham, his fellow-student, beside him.

"Now, don't be offended," said Gresham, in his short, quick way, and at the same time passing his arm through that of his companion, who was silent from overpowering confusion. Suddenly turning him round, he added, "I have been an accidental witness of your visit to the pawnbroker's, and I suspect your watch and chain are gone. I cannot help it if I unintentionally wound your pride, Langley, but this must not be; we will return and redeem the articles at once. I have money, and you are welcome to it; all I ask in return is your friendship, if you can give it."

Martin yielded, for though his was a strong will, he felt himself in the presence of one who owned a still stronger.

"Not a word," continued Justin; "but

take my purse and I shall feel obliged to you. Some day you may render me a much greater service."

Langley shook the hand so warmly proffered, and fully did he appreciate the delicate kindness expressed in this somewhat rough and hasty manner. When he could speak, it was to decline to accept the money. Justin was annoyed, but felt he could not press the matter further, and merely asked if he could serve him in any other way.

This elicited an explanation of Langley's difficulty, and as Justin was already in possession of the necessary volumes, these were at once placed at Langley's service.

The watch and chain were quickly restored to their owner, and out of this incident grew a firm friendship between the young men, and ere long they decided to lodge and study together. The advantages of this intimacy were reciprocal. Langley was older, more studious, and persevering than his friend, and thus was an excellent

counterpoise to Justin, with his acute discernment, but hasty and impetuous disposition. The friendship between these two honest-hearted men went far beyond the mere chumism of ordinary students, and fast ripened into a feeling of true brotherly love.

CHAPTER X.

"Art thou sad, oh ! absent friend ?
Dost thou feel that I am sad ?
Thou who once didst make me glad
Canst thou now no comfort lend ?"

SLEEP is a shy, timorous bird, hovering at night just above us in the darkness, its large dusky wings outspread over our heads, ready to descend and fold our senses in mysterious oblivion, but to be scared away by a rude sound or too wakeful thought. Like many other desirable things, the more eagerly pressed, the farther does it retreat from us.

Harriett Mayne's heart was too restless and excited on the night after the bazaar for this peace-loving bird to nestle near it ; wild fancies and incongruous shapes haunted her imagination, meaningless phrases from the conversation of the past day rang in

her ears. In the few snatches of troubled sleep she obtained, the faces of St. Clare and Lord Talbot constantly appeared, elongated, distorted, melting together, unlike the realities, yet like enough to leave no doubt as to whose they were. A sort of desperation overcomes the would-be sleeper, at a certain crisis in this wearisome wakefulness ; a desperation suggesting wild plans of getting up, dressing, and going out for a walk, or of systematically reading—of doing anything, in short, but remaining in bed.

In this state of mind Harriett jumped out of bed and lighted a candle. The light fell upon little Herbert, who slept in a crib by his aunt's side ; the brightness partially aroused him, and he turned uneasily in his sleep. After a moment, he was again fast locked in the deep, unconscious sleep of childhood ; one chubby arm lay bare outside the coverlid, the small hand grasped firmly a tin toy he had taken to bed with him, and

of which even in his slumber he tenaciously retained hold. Harriett was too fully experienced in the every-day life of children to sentimentalize about them. Most people who are thoroughly acquainted with them realize too vividly their selfishness, fractiousness, and general naughtiness, to admire the rose-coloured fancy portraits that the theorists of infantine existence delight in depicting. Children are not little angels : they are thoroughly human, but it is humanity in its most guileless, endearing aspect. These fresh souls are, for a time, strangers on the earth ; they open wide their eyes with unspeakable surprise at our world's usages, and we, looking on them, remembering the first untroubled innocence of our own hearts, sigh. We know these golden-curled darlings will grow like us ; they will not for long wear that sweet, astonished expression ; they will have to weep as we weep, and groan under life's burdens as we groan ; their tender feet must all

tread the same hard road we are treading, and their future heritage be, as ours, the grave.

Harriett leant over the boy, and conjectured what his future lot might be. She wondered if he would be as good a man as his father; if an undeveloped young genius lay before her, a future poet or legislator, if—but there was little probability of a grand career for Herbert Mayne: only mothers—and even aunts when they cannot sleep well—will weave romantic futures for unconscious childhood. “Most probably he will lead a quiet life, and never make any noise at all in the world,” thought Harriett, in conclusion; “he evinces no great genius at present, for aught that I can perceive, except it be for getting dirty!” Then she wandered away in her reflections, and wondered if ever she should gaze upon the sleeping form of her own boy—her own boy? Ah! would baby fingers ever press away the bitterness about her heart? It

would be very hard to be an old maid, and never know the deep, passionate loves of husband and children. Life looked terribly flat and dull without them : it seemed like looking over a low country, where no hill or tree broke the monotonous surface, until a gray horizon enclosed it. As far as she could discern, such must be the fate reserved for her—woman's instincts were strong within her.

A tear fell on Herbert's rosy cheek, making him start. Then there was a whisper in her soul : "Trust the hidden future in His hands, who never deserts His own ; put out your faith in the darkness, until it finds something to rest on ; tread on firmly, and fret not yourself about the coming years."

As Harriett sat over rather a late breakfast the next morning, the following conversation took place between her and her brother. Mrs. Mayne was not present ; it had been her habit to take her breakfast in

bed ever since she found Harriett's aptitude for making tea and keeping the children quiet, while she had an extra doze.

Robert Mayne had been expressing his approbation of the scheme for the lectures, when Harriett interrupted him, rather suddenly, by inquiring :

"Was not Lord Talbot engaged once upon a time?"

"I believe so. It is a subject he never speaks about. I was away at the time the marriage was proposed—tutor at Laleham, Maria's home, you know—but I never heard what broke it off; there is some mystery about it."

"You do not think, Robert, it was to that handsome woman who came to the bazaar yesterday, do you?"

Mr. Mayne shook his head. Harriett continued :

"I remember when I was a child meeting him out riding with a beautiful girl; her bright eyes and floating curls made an im-

pression on my fancy then. I was in mourning for our mother, and they stopped their horses; and when he whispered that I was an orphan, she stooped and kissed me, and gave me a rose she carried. What could have occurred to break off that marriage?"

Fortunately, Mr. Mayne was of a very unsuspicious nature, and Harriett's curiosity regarding Lord Talbot passed without special notice; he had never seen anything in her manners towards his lordship evidencing more than friendship.

"Robert, do you think Lord Talbot is as bad as they say?"

"Bad!" exclaimed Mr. Mayne, opening wide his eyes, "what do you mean, Harriett?"

"Oh! you know—dissipated."

Harriett played with her knife and fork while she spoke, and did not raise her head.

"I really *don't* know, Harriett. I hope

you have not been listening to idle tales ; people are so prone to detraction, they seem to delight in perceiving the mote in their brother's eye ; they quite rejoice and glorify themselves over others' failings, as though the contrast caused their own supreme virtue to shine the brighter. I always endeavour to think evil of no man."

Harriett thought her brother would not see the evil sometimes, even when right before him, but she let him have his say, and remained silent.

"Never listen to tale-bearers, Harriett ; for my part, I never do." And Mr. Mayne moved towards the door, indicating by a certain contraction of the brows that the subject was distasteful to him. It was as distasteful to Harriett, but she determined to press the matter home, and get a direct answer.

"You must have formed an opinion after all these years, Robert, and you have known

him so intimately ; besides, men form more correct judgments of each other than women of them. Tell me, now, what is your opinion of him ?”

Mr. Mayne, fairly brought to bay, and not seeing any way of escape, resolutely refused to give any opinion, and quoted Scripture to uphold his determination.

“ Judge not, dear sister ; we are all too censorious, and forget that command.”

Then, it being difficult for him to chide any one, and in the spirit of tenderness which made him always desire to efface any annoyance his words might have occasioned, he crossed the room and kissed his sister, continuing, apologetically :

“ If poor Henry has been faulty, he has been placed in circumstances of great temptation. I might have been equally, or more blameable in his position.”

“ Poor Henry ! ” repeated Harriett, scornfully, as her brother left the room. “ Robert is wondrously compassionate.

But he thinks him worthless, I can see, or he would have defended him warmly."

Her reflections were interrupted by the servant's delivering her a letter ; she opened it eagerly, as she recognized Justin Gresham's handwriting. As we have the privilege of looking over her shoulder, we will avail ourselves of it. The letter ran as follows :—

"DEAR HARRIETT,—

"There was reproof in your last few letters for the scarcity and brevity of mine. When I have explained the cause of my neglect, you will, I know, excuse it. Firstly, the head-physician of the establishment has been absent lately, and the whole care and responsibility has fallen on my shoulders.

"Secondly, I have been rather out of health ; and lastly, more out of spirits. No doubt you will be surprised at *my* owning to such a weakness, because I have so especially derided it in others, and considered the evil a mere figment of the ima-

gination attendant on idleness ; but I begin to perceive there are vexations no amount of work can dissipate, and sorrows that no energy of mind can shake off. I am not alluding to the mere petty trials of every day—thank Heaven, I can bear them cheerfully—but to something deeper. I may, perhaps, open my heart to you some day. Well, dear friend, no doubt you have your troubles also ; we know to Whom to take them, and where comfort is to be found, if anywhere ; so I will grumble no more at present.

“ I suppose it is hay-making time now at Maxwell. I should like to drop in amongst you and have a romp in the hay, as in days of yore. I was terribly rough with you then, and did not think much of knocking you about. I have been wondering lately how it was you and I never fell in love with each other. Many children have ardent love-affairs. I know your brother was always in that Slough of Despond when a youth. Ethel, too, had various

small fancies among the boys of our acquaintance, but you and I held ourselves clear. I believe we looked upon such attachments as childish folly, about on a par with dolls. We had a very grand idea of *friendship* from the old Greeks and Romans ; and I am glad we had, for, as I know, love-affairs are miserable mistakes. By the bye, Harriett, I have long intended to ask you something ;—no I won't, though ; I will wait till I see you."

"I have been interrupted for some ten minutes. The cause was this : there is a lady here who is attacked at times with fits of melancholy madness ; at such periods she always attempts to destroy herself ; at other times, when nothing arises to recall painful remembrance of her former life, she is as sane as you and I ; her rooms are at the end of this corridor, and for some time I had been disturbed by the sound of a low, continuous moaning. At last her female attendant came and called me, requesting I

would come and speak to her mistress, and persuade her to go to bed. I went. She was lying on the floor, with her hair down, in an utter abandonment of grief. I raised her, and, after some reasoning, induced her to go to bed. I am the only one who has the least control or influence over her. It seems she had heard one of the keepers call the other by the name of 'Henry' outside her door. 'Henry' was the name of her betrothed; her insanity alone prevented their union. I have my suspicions about this 'Henry;' I fancy I know who he is. He called to see her one day when I was away, and from the description given of him by her maid (who does not know his surname) I think I know him. I dare not question her, as any allusion to this person brings on a perfect paroxysm of grief.

"I am more interested in this case than I have been in any previous one; it makes my heart ache sometimes, because in her sane hours she is perfectly conscious of her

malady—*painfully* conscious. I kept her very quiet for some weeks, and she was getting much better, when she begged for a piano. I thought no harm could arise from that, so I granted her request. The very first night undid all the improvement of the past. She was playing various pieces, when all at once she commenced the 'Harmonious Blacksmith:' she sprang up, began to moan and wring her hands, and crying out that life was unendurable, rushed to the window to throw herself out. I was fortunately in the room; I secured her hands, and, almost forcing her on to the sofa, sat down beside her, and sternly asked her what she meant by such ridiculous conduct. A severe speech like that will often bring her to her senses, and before an hour was over I made her play through the piece without a tear. She is very much like a horse shying at an object in the road, which, made to go past it once, will not fear it again.

"She told me she was teaching her

younger brother that air the night before her father destroyed himself. This was the shock that impaired her reason.

"You must excuse my writing so much about this patient, but I have lately devoted myself, heart and soul, to this case; sometimes I have hopes of her recovery; but a book, a flower, a name, will undo all my care. Her name is Isobel Lavaine.

"I shall drop in upon you and surprise you all soon. Give my love to Ethel, and tell her not to over-excite herself. I write to my mother by this post, so you need not show my letter to any one.

"Have you seen Langley yet? He is a dear old fellow, as you may guess from all I have told you of him. He is very reserved; but when he gets used to you, he will venture out of his shell, and you will like him. I can sum up his character in two words: he is a Christian gentleman—synonymous words almost, in my acceptance of them.

"I hope this letter will pay off my long-standing account. It is lengthy enough.

"I am, as ever,

"Your sincere friend,

"JUSTIN GRESHAM."

Does the reader discern anything of the real character of the writer from his letter? There is a great deal of disposition indicated in handwriting; that of Justin was small, neat, and decided.

"Poor Justin!" sighed Harriett, folding up his letter; "he is in trouble also; what can his trouble be? He cannot be in love, surely? It is very strange; but somehow I feel a little jealous when I think of his being in love. I suppose it is the jealousy mothers and sisters feel when their brothers and sons cease to want them; they can live and do without them; another has supplied their place. But let me think what Justin's trouble can be, supposing it not to be love. He cannot be in debt. He is too prudent.

I dare say it is that his ambition is not satisfied ; he begins to find all things tire—all things pall, and are wearisome ; and yet he ought not to feel that, if he be a true Christian, as I think he is." Here she sighed, as a comparison crossed her mind between two persons. " How I honour Justin ; how I can rely on him ! Why, I wonder, did I not love him also ? Oh ! that I had. I sometimes think I will tell Justin all my trouble ; I so long to tell some one ; I have often had it on the tip of my tongue to tell Ethel, but something in her innocence of heart, her childlikeness, has restrained me ; she has never loved. Ah ! what a woeful difference it makes, that *love* ! I can add, she then has never sorrowed. I pray God she may never feel all the bitterness of heart I feel !

" If I could only leave here, leave home and Maxwell ; but I must break through so many ties, and leave what I think to be my post of duty. How would the children

fare, and Robert, and that poor, weak woman, who neglects so palpably the duties of wife and mother? Where would the parish and schools be? No, I must stay and bear my burden, and strive to bear it patiently. It is the very cross my Saviour has given me to bear; shall I, then, try to escape from it?

“ I sometimes hope to see the good assert itself in Talbot's heart; that good I sometimes see peeping out in his words. He cannot be utterly insincere and frivolous; I have seen real tears in his eyes at the sorrow of others; I have known him generous and most forgiving. If I married him, might I not hope to direct that erring spirit aright? It would be a hard task, but I might try. How painful it would be at times to feel that rising contempt for a husband that I often feel for him now. Would it be right to swear ‘ to love, honour, and obey,’ when in some things I am certain I never should ?

My heart vacillates between two courses like yonder leaves, shivering and palpitating in the breeze, wafted first into that sunny track disclosed by a parting in the higher boughs, and then borne back again into the shade. This sun is changeable and cloud-crossed; the warmth varies, but the shade is cold and drear. For ever ('tis a terrible word!) for ever, to withdraw from this bright hope so long illumining my path, this hope growing at times into a certainty! Would not existence be dreadfully objectless, pointless, and vapid? Would not the long days drag after one another without a sunrise or sunset, and all my visible world be obscured in a gray fog? Ah! that I had never seen him! The old passion and the old struggle are renewed each time I meet him, and yet I choose to meet him. Therefore would I separate myself from him and Maxwell for ever; perhaps when oceans were between us I might forget."

After a pause she continued her soliloquy.

“There is a possibility even now of my folly being cured, if it could be satisfactorily proved to me that he were utterly worthless.”

With a sigh, she left the room to go about her daily duties.

CHAPTER XI.

"If Time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate,
Nor any poor about your lands?
Oh! teach the orphan boy to read,
Or teach the orphan girl to sew;
Pray Heaven for a human heart,
And let the foolish yeoman go."

TENNYSON.

HARRIETT went first to the cottage of the Burrows; one of the children had died of the fever, and the poor mother was stricken down under her first great grief. Harriett's heart was sad; she felt more in harmony with sorrow than joy to-day, and could the better sympathize with those who mourned. Still, she feared it would be rather a difficult task to calm Mary Burrows' unreasonable outburst of sorrow. The woman was ignorant, superstitious, firmly attached to a different faith, and was accessible to neither reason nor, from Miss

Mayne, religion. But she was a woman—a mother, who had lost her child; and Harriett hoped that she would be able to offer some consolation; at any rate, it was her *duty* to go, so Harriett did not hesitate, but went.

Just as she reached the little broken-down gate, she encountered St. Clare. He stopped her and shook hands, and then inquired if she were going into that cottage, and who lived there. St. Clare's questions were not prompted by idle curiosity; he had been thinking during the morning of Mr. Gresham's comment on his "butterfly existence." "Butterfly existence!" the words had stung him deeply, that Ethel's father should have so poor an opinion of him, and, worse still, that the opinion should be a true one. How was he to make his life otherwise than butterfly-like; how was he to put an earnest aim, an object into it? He knew not. He had no necessity to exert himself, and his ambition for fame,

merely, had long ago been quenched in the full tide of sorrow.

Every man, unless he be a trifler or a fool, wakes up at some time in his life, and demands of his own soul a reply to the question, of what use is he in this world? Ernest St. Clare had been propounding that query all the morning, and the answer was unsatisfactory. To eat, drink, and be merry; to keep from gross evils, and strive for intellectual eminence, to live wholly in himself, to himself, and for himself! No wonder that all that was noble and energetic in his nature revolted at such thralldom to self. No wonder that in his satiety of earth's pleasures, his weariness of mind, he desired rather to escape by death than drag on this "butterfly existence." A comparison presented itself to him of his life and Talbot's with Robert and Harriett Mayne's—a comparison that filled him with disgust at himself and his friend.

Here were the former, spending their lives

in endeavours to stem the tide of wretchedness and evil around them, to raise others to their own level ; he knew they were often baffled, subdued, and overcome, but they went on with a wonderful persistency, and bore ingratitude and derision without murmuring. A few wild schemes suggested themselves to St. Clare's mind—building a church, founding a hospital, becoming a Lord Shaftesbury, and dedicating his time and income to ragged schools and shoe-black brigades ; but these were impracticable for the present ; and gradually his ideas contracted from that wide circle of benevolence to the smaller focus of the neighbourhood close around him. Here was Maxwell *with* plenty of poor people in it, and he had money to spare ; he would call at once on Robert Mayne, and place his purse at his disposal for their benefit.

It was with this intention he had started out, when he met Harriett Mayne. In answer to his inquiries, she told him the out-

line of the Burrows' history, and as he listened with apparent interest, she was led on to say, with a flush on her pale cheek, "They are Lord Talbot's tenants, and he really ought to attend to their wants a little; the roof requires looking to, it has fallen in and filled one room with its *débris*. Perhaps you would be kind enough to mention it to him?"

She opened the gate, and was passing in, but St. Clare stayed her; she seemed to him like the vanishing angel who came to the gates of Paradise, and informed the poor Peri what she must do to re-inherit that blessed abode. Here was a chance: he must not let it slip away from him; so with a nervous eagerness in voice and manner, he said:

"Lord Talbot is out, but I am such an intimate friend, that I can act for him; the place looks ruinous, indeed. Let me see what is to be done, and it shall be looked to at once. Can I come with you into the

cottage, Miss Mayne? I should be glad to help you in some of your good work."

Harriett heard with surprise and pleasure; it was fortunate for him, in his present mood that he had met her; a word, a sneering tone, a covert smile, would have quickly damped, and perhaps extinguished, the newly-kindled ardour; but Harriett was earnest and straightforward, and ready to give others credit for the same virtues; so she stirred the embers to a flame.

"If you have the will, Mr. St. Clare, I can give you plenty to do. But there is fever in the cottage; perhaps, you had better not enter."

"There is a threshold of danger and difficulty to every enterprise," he replied.

"Ah! Miss Mayne, you are contemptuous; but perhaps I deserve it. If you, a lady, were about to enter fearlessly, ought I to hold back?"

"But I am so accustomed to these risks," said Harriett, with the calm self-forgetful-

ness of one used all her life to think last of her own interest. To the young poet, the braids of her auburn hair seemed a halo of saint-like glory. "Well, if you wish to come—come," continued Harriett, opening the gate.

When she had tapped at the door, and a voice within had bidden her enter, she motioned to St. Clare to remain where he was ; and looked in through the half-opened door.

Never before had such a scene presented itself to his view ; the squalor and wretchedness of the room, which barely deserved the name ; broken windows, rotten flooring, damp, dilapidated walls ; the absence of all order and comfort, struck upon his unaccustomed sense as perfectly appalling. What shocked him most, however, was, that which stood all unconcealed, on two chairs in a corner—the little coffin ! This terrible nearness of life and death ; that that should be in sight of the mother, who cowered over the fire with the sick child in her

arms! How could it be helped, when there was no other room habitable? St. Clare, the fastidious and sensitive, the man of deep feelings and quick emotions, felt sick and faint, and leant against the door for support. Sudden remorse seized him: here was all this misery, and much more such as this, going on for years, and he had never known it; he, who might with a little trouble, a little expenditure, have relieved so much. But he had been ignorant, wilfully ignorant; he had never thought to turn aside and lift the latch of a cottage-door!

These thoughts all rushed through his mind at the first glance, after which he had plenty of time to listen to the conversation between Harriett and the woman by the fire. Harriett had addressed her gently, and inquired how the child was; but Mary Burrows, in her absolute dejection, never lifted her head, but, hugging the baby closer to her, only moaned in reply:

“Ah! miss, he'll never get better; he's

dying, faith and sure, before my eyes. I wish I could just go to heaven along wid him."

"Are you so sure you *would* go to heaven, Mary Burrows? You are not like the sinless child on your breast. We have no right to wish to die merely because we are miserable here; in that state of mind, I don't think heaven would suit us any better than earth. But I must not blame you; I know too well what it is to be sorrowful; but I think the baby looks healthier, and Mr. Langley told me it was ever so much better yesterday."

"Did he, miss?" and sudden hope kindled in the woman's large, beautiful eyes. "Sure, you and he are like two blessed angels in the house. I never see a man so woman-like; he stayed for two hours and more the other night when little Katie died. Poor James could do nothing but roll on the floor and groan; I was nursing baby, so he held the darling in his arms; her last look was on his face. Och! she'll know

him again ; she'll come to meet him at the gates of heaven, I know." Then the mother hid her face and sobbed for awhile, and Harriett struggled between tears and smiles —tears at this sight of grief, and smiles at the confusion of mind in which Mary Burrows forgot that Mr. Langley was a heretic, and would never go to heaven except by some special interposition on the part of the saints.

Presently Harriett found opportunity to say, " Here is a gentleman come with me to look at the roof ; he will have it mended at once."

" Faith, the landlord's been long enough thinking about it."

Mrs. Burrows rose ; Harriett took the baby ; and St. Clare entered the cottage, and followed the poor woman, to examine the miserable condition of the tumble-down tenement. Mrs. Burrows had not looked at St. Clare ; she thought he was Lord Talbot's steward, or the builder from the

town. He stood behind her; and while remarking that he saw what was wanted, and that some men should be sent immediately, she turned, and lifting her heavy eyelids, gazed upon him with a sudden gleam of intelligence in her face.

"The Holy Mother save me!" she exclaimed, "but I've seen you before, sir."

"I think not," replied St. Clare, moving a step back into the shadow.

"You were never in Ireland, sir?"

"Never!"

"You're the living image of my late sweet mistress, Mrs. Montague."

An expression as of a sharp spasm shot across St. Clare's face. He turned abruptly, and murmuring something about hastening to give orders about the repairs, he hastily left the cottage.

"Who is he, miss?"

Harriett briefly explained.

"Faith, he looked scared when I said her name."

Harriett thought so too, but she held her peace, and asked who was this Mrs. Montague. She thought it would be a good thing to distract the poor woman from brooding on her grief, were it only for a few moments.

“Ah! she's dead and gone now, poor lamb! He has just her pretty eyes and soft wavy hair. She was the wife of Colonel Montague: he brought her from England to Donegal. I was a girl then; she took me to be her maid. Och! if ever a man did worship a woman, he did her: they had no children, and she was never well like—always sorrowful and sad. He watched her and tended for all the world like her ain mother; and when she fell ill, and faded day by day, like a white rose, he tended her and fed her, and would have no one else near her, and a look of anguish in his eyes. Sure, me and the other servants used to weep to see him. At last she died. One evening we heard no sound up-stairs, no bell rang; so two of us crept up and just looked in at

the door, and there she lay with her head on his breast, quite dead !” And Mary Burrows wept anew over her old sorrow.

“Don’t tell me, Mary, if it hurts your feelings,” said Harriett.

She, too, was moved at this pathetic history.

“Sure, there’s little more to tell ; but it eases my heart like, to think how he suffered, the poor darlint ! He never cried one bit, but just sat by her, day by day, eating what we gave him like a baby, until they came and took her away. Then he followed, like one in a dream ; and when they threw the earth on her coffin, he gave a start and a great sob, as though his poor heart broke. Then he settled back into his own quiet ways. When we went home, I had howled myself pretty near wild, and he came and lifted me off the floor, and talked to me about her that had gone to heaven, and how we need not weep for her, because he knew she was happier now than all her life.”

"What became of him?"

"He paid us all, and sold the house, and went abroad."

"You don't think the young gentleman could be any relative?"

"No, I think not, because I see no reason for his not owning it at once."

As Harriett walked home, she pondered it all over, and she certainly felt there was something suspicious in that palpable start St. Clare gave at the mention of the name of Montague. But if there were a mystery it was nothing to her; she had no motive to seek to solve it, save the natural curiosity of her sex.

After the conversation at the bazaar between the doctor and the clergyman, there had been a move to get up the proposed lectures. The ladies of the town were soon interested in the scheme; and Harriett, Ethel, Mrs. Gresham, and a few others, animated with a spirit of reform and progress, visited their richer neighbours, and

begged subscriptions to provide the rooms, chairs, forms, and all other necessaries, and then visited their poorer neighbours, to ascertain their feeling towards the proposed plan, and urge their attendance. These latter efforts were generally received with surly indifference, often with rudeness ; the men growlingly intimated they did not want amusement or instruction when they came home tired from work ; they wanted to be "left alone."

The Maxwellians being obstinate block-heads, liked their own old ways, and turned their backs resolutely upon all "new-fangled notions." They had admired the late Lord Talbot because he was a fierce Tory. Even he lost their favour for a short time, when he introduced a steam-plough on his ground, but regained it by allowing the annual fair to be held in one of his fields, and attending himself.

They declared themselves to be quite satisfied with the present order of things ; they

preferred bad drainage and tumble-down cottages to anything new and flourishing ; they burnt down a farmer's house because he made his hay with a machine, and would have gone out in a body to protest against it had it been proposed to bring the railroad from the neighbouring town on to them.

Such being the character of these people, you may imagine the active ladies talked themselves hoarse before the obdurate townsfolk yielded ; then a few, principally women, consented to come, "just to oblige their parson," Robert Mayne—who was as much respected because he belonged to an old and worthy family, as for his own intrinsic merits.

The vicar, one sultry afternoon, after encountering Mr. Gresham in the town, entered his shady drawing-room in a slightly excited state of mind. Harriett was seated by the open window, mending small socks, and Mrs. Mayne was lying on the sofa, with a bad headache. They both looked up as

he entered, for he came in with an unusually energetic stride.

"Harriett,"—it was his sister, never his wife, to whom he appealed in any emergency—"Harriett, I have just met Gresham. He insists on the first lecture being delivered this day week, and by me. I do not think I can, and I told him so. I have just now so much to do. Besides, what is the use of stifling people in close rooms when the thermometer is up to 70? Ugh! it fatigues me to think of it." And he threw open his coat, and fanned himself with his handkerchief.

"Do you really want my advice, Robert?"

"I do."

"Then it coincides with Mr. Gresham's opinion. If these lectures are put off until the winter, what little interest now exists will subside. Strike while the iron is hot!"

"Hot!—it is hot!" sighed Mrs. Mayne,

opening her eyes. "Robert, reach me that fan off the mantelpiece. I almost fear my new silk dress will be too warm for to-morrow evening at Lord Talbot's. By the bye, Harriett, what do you intend wearing? Not that old blue thing, I hope? You really ought to have purchased a new dress."

"Nonsense!" returned Harriett. Then turning to her brother, she continued: "If you would decide on a subject, Robert, I could look out references, and get the materials forward for you."

"Thank you, my dear! always my helper."

"Robert," cried Mrs. Mayne, "I will not be interrupted! I must know what the child means to wear! I shall insist on her going respectably dressed; there is no knowing whom we may meet there. I cannot have her taken up with your nonsensical plans, which never *will* come to anything, I feel assured. What will people say if she appears vulgar or mean-looking? You

are not accustomed to genteel society, and do not know how important dress is. Oh, dear, how my head aches !”

“ You have a dress to wear, Harriett ?” asked her brother, despondently.

“ Of course ! If not, I should not have accepted the invitation,” replied Harriett, with some vexation. “ I have a white muslin, quite good enough ; gloves, bracelets, and all necessary finery. I think,” she continued, rising and gathering together her work, “ I think we had better go to the library, Robert ; talking may make Maria’s head worse.”

There was slight vexation in her tone, slight contempt in the haughty toss of her head, as she followed her brother to the door. Contempt and vexation got the better of her at times, strive how she would to keep them down ; intolerance of the subjection of her lot rose fiercely in her mind, and she longed to give vent to these feelings in bitter, wrathful words. This was the

great temptation of Harriett's life, the inclination to speak bitterly of her sister-in-law ; it beset her at every step. Often left alone with her brother after one of these galling scenes wherein the folly and selfishness of Mrs. Mayne appeared so distinctly, she longed to break out and complain. Often tempted to murmur to others, the Greshams, or Talbot ; it was one long struggle to subdue this desire.

She sat down by the library-table and resolutely threaded her needle. If her hands were not busy, her tongue might be ; therefore she darned away with vigour. Why speak, when by angry words the household peace might be for ever destroyed ? "I will not take the bandage from his eyes, poor brother ! I have borne with her these many years ; cannot my patience last a little longer ? Ah ! how long must it continue ? If I only knew the time of my deliverance !"

CHAPTER XII.

"Which did he love, pardie?
The handsome, lightsome dame,
Or the maid of simplicitie?
Perchance he loved both the same."

OLD BALLAD.

SOMERS, Lord Talbot's butler, a middle-aged, respectable, smooth-faced servant, with fewer wrinkles than his master, visited the drawing-room on the evening of Talbot's "friendly dinner" with a feather-brush, and a mind for reflection. He dusted the mirrors, and thought "There ain't many pretty faces to look into these now. Times was very different in the old lady's lifetime; there was plenty of ringlets and flounces going about then. The Lavaines and other young folk; that poor young lady is dead and gone what poor Lord Henry was after. Ah! dear, he ain't the

same creature now ; it takes a many disappointments to harden one's heart as hard as his is, *surely*. I mind me when he was christened ; there was grand doings, and all the bells was rung. I was only a young fellow then, just in buttons ; but it makes me gloomy to remember what a healthy baby he was—such a colour, and such legs—and what is he now ? Colour and legs he's scarcely any, keeps no company, no game, nor stables neither ; lets the old family go to nothing in the county, instead of marrying, and having a family, and keeping up the 'stabishment."

Somers sighed, got on a chair, and lit the wax-lights in the antique silver candelabra ; Florence-work that the late lord had purchased.

" 'Tain't often they're greased," he reflected ; " and I shall clean them myself, with my own mixture. There's his cousin, Mrs. Romilly now, I saw her at the bazaar, come over from the Leslie's purpose to see

him—a widow, with her eyes open, I'll be bound ; there's something in her manner means courting ! I was standing at the door of the Town Hall, having sent James back with the carriage, and the Leslie's carriage drives up ; out jumps the widow, as young as ever ; sees me, nods, and says, ' You're quite an old friend, Somers.' Yes, she's a smart lady ; she makes me think of the print Lord Talbot got of the widow his uncle was so fond of ; his Uncle Toby he called him, though I don't know which uncle he meant. The twelve lights is sufficient, I'm thinking ; it's only the Maynes coming ; those Leslie's ain't much either—mushroom gentry. I shan't light them on the mantelpiece, nor them before the picture ;" and he glanced over his shoulder at a painting of the Virgin and Child, after Raphael.

"The old house hasn't seen any good since those idolatrous things were brought in, and my lord turned Papist." Somers

shuddered, then drew a curtain, so as half to conceal the objectionable painting. "I'll be bound I don't bring up the best port for that sly priest as is coming here to-day; asking Mr. Mayne to meet him, too! He ain't fit to sit at the same table with such a Christian!"

Talbot just then entered the apartment, and looked round him.

"Somers!" he cried, the room will be very dark; can't you manage things better than this? My guests will be tumbling over one another. Light the other candles; they are poor things, but better than twilight. Put some flowers in those vases, and don't close the shutters yet; throw open that window, it's hot and stifling."

Having concluded, he flung himself into a deep-cushioned chair so heavily as to raise a cloud of dust from the old, unused piece of furniture, which powdered his black coat, and made him spring up and call on

Somers to remove the rotten old thing, or he should be smothered.

"No, my lord, I can't move that," answered the butler, firmly.

Talbot looked up with some surprise ; he seldom bore contradiction : there was a cruel light in his eyes which would have made most men obey without another word ; but Somers returned his master's gaze without flinching, while he replied, slowly :

"May be, my lord, you have forgotten that is the chair my lady, your mother, always sat in ; it never has been moved. My lady liked to see the garden when she was too ill to walk in it."

"Oh ! let it be !" said Talbot, turning hurriedly from the old man's clear gray eyes ; there was a slight flush on his sallow cheek ; he was half ashamed to find the old servant more tenacious than himself of his mother's memory.

Dinner was at half-past seven, and a few minutes before that time Lord Talbot's

guests are all assembled in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Romilly was introduced to the "tall, red-haired gawk of a girl." She did not find her shy or awkward, although somewhat reserved and slightly nervous when she spoke.

"She is not so bad," thought Mrs. Romilly; "a beautiful complexion, a graceful carriage, intelligent eyes, and better dressed than one could have expected—no poor finery."

Thus it was the woman of the world, after five minutes' quiet scrutiny, summed up her rival—for rival she instinctively felt her to be; she measured her own powers and attractions against Harriett's, and she felt herself weak, her enemy strong. An auxiliary must be called in to assist her; that auxiliary must be the priest Seveli.

Mrs. Romilly, with all her gaiety, was a staunch Churchwoman, and very much disliked to place her cause in the hands of a

Roman Catholic ; but principles, thought she, must give place to love, and Protestantism to a title.

Harriett certainly looked very well that evening. She wore a white dress, and her hair was rolled back, a fashion just then coming into vogue, which suited her better than her usual style ; a wreath of dark ivy leaves on her head formed a good contrast to her fair hair ; she appeared a little severe in her simplicity, perhaps, reminding one involuntarily of pictured saints on old cathedral walls. Talbot likened her during the evening to a picture of Dante's Beatrice.

Harriett, in her turn, noted Mrs. Romilly, and thought "Very handsome—very ! What a pleasant, self-complacent smile ! what glossy hair, and white, jewelled hands ! She is certainly made to please in face, voice, and gesture." Harriett's heart sank low.

Besides Mr. and Mrs. Mayne, there were

the Leslies. Mr. Leslie, a gray-whiskered and dogmatical man, proud of his daughter, jealous of his wife, and envious of most people. Mrs. Leslie, who had once been a *belle*, was now a sharp, showy, frivolous, middle-aged woman, who was always annoyed at bringing her daughter out with her. Miss Leslie was a handsome, dull girl, with dark eyes and a rich glowing colour on her cheeks, not the effect of emotion, but of sturdy health.

The only other guest was Father Petre Seveli, who accompanied the Leslies, being tutor to their only son. Talbot had invited him from mixed motives; partly from respect to the man who had been mainly instrumental in converting him to Popery, and partly (this was the stronger reason) of having the pleasure of setting him off against Mr. Mayne. Seveli was a sharp fencer in an argument; he did not get heated, but eluded his opponent's thrusts, and pricked him up on unexpected points.

Outwardly he was straight-haired and straight-featured, with a slim figure, elegant and lively manners, not untouched by sarcasm, and large, observant eyes.

All the time we have been introducing the little party, they are waiting dinner in the drawing-room. Talbot has introduced the two ecclesiastics to each other. Sevegli having expressed himself proud and happy to have shaken hands with Mr. Mayne, that good man, who does not wish to be behind his rival in cordiality, swallows sectarian differences and plunges into conversation with becoming affability. They find there are points on which they agree, and can discuss with mutual interest objects of curiosity and art. They talk of Italy, secular and artistic Italy, but wisely leave Papal Rome unapproached. Sevegli has taste, is something of a virtuoso; he understands music thoroughly, and is a good judge of painting; he has also in exquisite perfection the accomplishment of adapting himself and

his conversation to the society he is in. Mr. Mayne actually forgets after a few moments that he is talking to a Romish priest, and the man who has won Lord Talbot from the English Church. He forgets the warnings he has so often heard, of Jesuitical cunning and eloquence ; he forgets all but the presence of a bland, educated man, whose conversation has an irresistible charm, and whose knowledge is extensive. Mayne is quite vexed when the announcement of dinner interrupts them, and obliges him to change his companion.

Sevelli took Mrs. Mayne down to dinner. In any other house than that of a lord, she would have revolted from such contact. She had been outraged in her feelings when she saw her husband talking to the priest with apparent interest ; she was still more shocked when Sevelli, at Talbot's request, stood up and muttered a Latin benediction on the meal before them. In this sentiment of disgust she was joined by Somers,

who groaned audibly as he uncovered the soup.

It was not so much Robert Mayne's pride as a Protestant—for the grace suited his own creed equally with Sevelli's—as his affection for Talbot, which received a wound in this marked preference. He had been so accustomed to perform that ceremony at Lord Talbot's table ever since he had been pastor of the parish—and even before that time, when a youth, at the board of the late lord, in view of his future vocation, he had been called upon by his kind host to bless the meal—that now he felt cast off, his last hold on the faulty nobleman, whom he loved in spite of all, loosened. This brought home to him painfully that to Talbot he was no longer a Christian priest. It was but a small thing that caused these mingled and tumultuous feelings; still, a very small thing will often cause great pain—an idle remark, an angry look, or a foolish jest—and although Robert Mayne appeared (for,

indeed, he endeavoured) to forget this slight annoyance—still, it made his sherry tasteless, and his soup unpalatable—until the second course, by which time he had almost forgotten it.

Harriett found herself at table between Mr. Leslie and St. Clare. They were neither of them very entertaining—the former being wholly absorbed in his dinner, and the latter uncommunicative and dull; why, she could not exactly define, but she fancied, from his glance, he was in some way annoyed by Mrs. Romilly's presence. Harriett endeavoured to catch the conversation between Seveli and Talbot. She found herself attracted towards the priest, despite her strong prejudice against Papists—a prejudice which was strengthened in this case by the knowledge of Seveli's influence over Talbot's mind. She heard Seveli urge Talbot to take a Continental tour, and overrule all the latter's objections, until he acknowledged "Maxwell was dull, and perhaps he had

rusted so long he had almost forgotten what life was."

These sentiments made Harriett uncomfortable. Yet, how few days ago we heard her say, "Ah! that I could leave Maxwell for ever!" But this idea of his going away from her was quite another thing; it would prove his indifference. While, in the former, there was a lingering satisfaction in the thought, "Perhaps he would miss me, after all!" She was rather vexed, she hardly knew why, to see Mrs. Romilly heading her cousin's table. "Suppose that should be the end of it, after all," she said to herself. "Why, I would never sit at his table again, although I know he would even then put me at his right hand, and stab me with politeness. How I should hate to meet his eye, or hers either! I should feel sick, and eat nothing, but say rude things—perhaps tell him how I despised him."

Even thinking of it caused Harriett's cheek to burn, and made her glad when

dinner was over, and she heard their host's soft voice, saying, "Mr. Mayne, may I ask you to give thanks?"

Pride, and the remnant of a wounded feeling, caused a momentary hesitation in Robert Mayne's mind; then he rebuked himself. "Because I was proud, and a man mortified me, shall I refuse to thank God?"

Anger melted away at his own reproof. So will it often, if we will but hear the inward admonition of "Peace, be still," and not close our ears against the suggestions of reason and conscience.

Sevelli glanced up at the true minister, who, exalted by the victory over himself, stood up and spoke a few simple, thankful words with unconscious dignity; and Sevelli thought, "There is more in that man than I had imagined."

Harriett felt very much relieved when the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, as she had had the laborious duty

of conversing with Miss Leslie, a young lady with only two ideas—marrying a rich man and working a set of drawing-room chair-covers. Although the time appeared long to her, in reality it had been short; offensively so, indeed, to Mr. Leslie, a gentleman who liked to drink port wine and discuss county news until, being sufficiently muddled and bombastic, his carriage arrived to convey him home. For once in his life, he was not suffered to have his own way, but had to undergo the infliction of hearing Mrs. Romilly play, and seeing Talbot flirt with his wife. Being a disagreeable man, it made him perfectly wretched to see every one else apparently enjoying themselves; so, when Mrs. Romilly had finished her very spirited piece, he thanked her for her efforts, but remarked, in a high tone, that the instrument was dreadfully out of tune.

“Yes, Mr. Leslie,” replied his host, smiling at the other’s weak attempt to chafe him. “Yes, my dear sir, all in this house

is shattered and worn; the reflex of a splendour that has for ever departed, like the faint tinge of pink in yonder sky to the full glory of the sun. That instrument is like its owner; strings are broken, the harmony is gone—the case is here, but the soul has fled.”

Mrs. Mayne was so touched at this pathetic speech that she thought proper to wipe her eyes.

Mrs. Romilly, leaning one white, jewelled hand on the piano, laughed her ringing laugh, and said: “No great damage done yet, Henry; it only requires a skilful musician to extract sweetness from either.”

“My cousin is indulgent to me. I shall grow too self-complacent, if you YOUNGER ladies do not say something severe to bring me to myself.”

Miss Leslie and Harriett Mayne both looked up at him, as he spoke. Harriett's glance penetrated him, and asked—

“Why do you talk this paltry nonsense?”

You do not care for the applause it will gain."

Whether Talbot felt her unspoken reproof or not, we cannot say, but he crossed the room, and had a little bit of sentimental, aristocratic small-talk with Mrs. Mayne, of which speedily tiring, he sat down, shut his eyes, stroked his chin, and wished everything at the deuce.

Mrs. Romilly, who had stood by the piano since she rose, turning over the leaves of a music-book with that white, jewelled hand of hers, saw everything—had learnt that the "red-haired" girl's silent contempt could move Talbot—was fully aware her own attractions could *not* move him. So much for this night, at least, but "Wait, wait; it is a caprice of Henry's," she mused, "and must soon pass away, as did his love for Isobel." And, moved by a spirit for action, Mrs. Romilly chose some music, called St. Clare, made him play, and then, with a stately, undulating walk peculiar to

her, stepped to the old arm-chair we have mentioned in the commencement of this chapter. She was just seating herself, when Lord Talbot, with hurry unusual in him, left his seat, and caught her hand.

"No, no, Mrs. Romilly. Come to this sofa. I would not have you sit in that chair for any consideration—it is so old and dusty. Besides," he added, in a lower key, "I want you to talk to Mrs. Mayne. It will make her quite happy—any recital of grandeur, going to Court, or something of the sort."

Mrs. Romilly did as requested, but not without some suspicions that Talbot had more than one motive in asking her to change her seat. However, she masked her displeasure, and won Mrs. Mayne's heart by describing a breakfast at the Duchess of —'s.

Why Talbot would not let his cousin sit in his mother's chair, he could not quite explain to himself; but her attempt to do so seemed to him what he was in the habit of

calling "bad taste," by which term he meant any desecration of feeling, human or divine ; that a something, for which he had no name, rose up within to prevent her was all he knew. The same nameless something, perhaps it was, that sent him immediately across the room to Harriett's side, and, regardless of Miss Leslie's vicinity, caused him to throw himself into a chair without, for once, considering the grace of his position.

"Talk to me, Harriett," he whispered. "I want something to soothe me. Would you, if all these people were away, speak gently to me, and put your hand on my head, and still the worry there ? Would you ?"

Harriett avoided a direct reply, and answered :

"You pay me a poor compliment, my lord, if you only come to me when you are out of temper."

"Drop the 'my lord' for this occasion ; it sickens me. I wish I had no title when I

hear you 'my-lording' me. I know why you do it so constantly ; it is your pride, Harriett. When you dub me with my title you say, ' I am only a clergyman's daughter, you are a peer ;' you fence up the barrier. Well, do not blush ; I am reduced to a miserable state when I can be cross to you. It is this dull life I lead in Maxwell ; I must find some excitement."

"It is not merely that," replied Harriett. "You have some present cause for vexation ; I never knew you fret but over the trouble of the moment."

"Well, there is something ; shall I tell you ?" and he leaned forward, his face between his palms, his elbows on his knees. "It is that woman opposite—you see her—my cousin. Very handsome, eh?"

"Yes."

"And very charming ?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what old Weller said about widows ?"

"No."

"Well, his remark was vulgar, but indicated a great knowledge of human nature. I am afraid of her, Harriett—positively afraid."

"Well, we won't talk of her."

He paused, and still leaning forward, surveyed Harriett with some scrutiny ; her hands were closely clasped upon her lap, and his eyes rested lastly upon them.

"Who gave you that ring, and why do you wear it on the third finger of your left hand ?"

"Justin Gresham gave it to me, and I wear it there because it is most convenient. I like to keep the right hand free."

"Very sensible and independent ; but let me look at the ring."

Harriett held out her hand, a smooth taper hand, and Talbot slipped off the ring. He glanced at it, dropped it into his waistcoat pocket, and rising at the same moment, asked St. Clare for some more music. He

did not even look back towards her, and she did not dare to call aloud, or ask him for the ring.

There was a momentary lull in the conversation as St. Clare passed across the room to the piano, and some sound seemed to catch his ear. He turned abruptly, listened, and became rather pale.

"It is some one playing Isobel's organ," he said, half to himself, and then, with a pained expression, turned, and left the room.

There was a pause, the music still played on, and all looked to Talbot for an explanation.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, with mock gravity, "you need an explanation, and you shall have it. But beware! it will not relieve your nervousness, but increase it."

"Never mind," cried the ladies, in chorus, "go on."

"I really forgot, when I issued my in-

vitations, that this was the night on which my respected ancestor, Sir Ralph Talbot, was apt to revisit the scene of his mortal existence. In the reign of Henry VIII., he lived, and one night, taking a slight fancy into his head that his wife was untrue, he murdered her and her seven sleeping children. The organ is now playing her dirge, and if you will accompany me to the gallery we shall have the pleasure of seeing Sir Ralph stalking to and fro with a bloody sword in one hand, and the heads of his seven children in the other. Shall we meet him, ladies?" and he offered an arm to Harriett and Mrs. Romilly.

All eagerly crowded to the door of the gallery; it was long and dark, no light came through the windows, which looked out into the garden, as the night was dull. A faint light was burning at the farthest end, and by it could be discerned the figure of a man seated at an organ.

"It's Father Petre," cried Miss Leslie;

"it's too bad of him to frighten us so. How did he find the organ?"

"I happened to mention it at dinner," replied Talbot, "so all this terrific mystery is speedily dispelled. I hope, however, you will give me the credit for being a good story-teller."

"Wonderful!" cried Mrs. Romilly.

"Let us sit here," said Talbot; and they seated themselves on the broad ledge of one of the windows; the rest of the party stood round the door, or advanced nearer to the musician.

Sevelli, who appeared in no way conscious of their presence, played on. He was an excellent musician, and had complete command over the instrument before him. It was some time since the gallery had echoed the tones of that organ, years since the walls had reverberated such peals as now shook them.

Talbot, as he sat between his two fair guests, had gone far away into the past, and

was peopling the corridor with ghosts. Oh, music, wondrous is thy power to bring from half-forgotten days memories of the past ! Every chord calling up a word or look, a smile or tear, on faces never again to be beheld. He called to mind one summer evening, some ten years ago, when there had been guests at his father's table, and they had, as now, sat in the gallery listening to the organ, played by a fair young girl, his betrothed. Did St. Clare remember that day ? He was but a boy then, beautiful as clever, the joy and pride of his parents. Two homes had been devastated since then. Where was all the hope and pleasure gone that had then filled his breast ? Talbot asked himself. Oh ! was there no Lethe ? Why could he not forget these things ? Must music for ever haunt him like a solemn spell ? As he looked back, the pain that was the greatest, although he never would have allowed it, was caused by the knowledge that he was not what he would

wish to be ; if he could then have seen what he would become in ten years, he would have turned from the revelation with disgust.

The music ceased, and Seveli slowly rose, closed the instrument, and walked towards them, with a look of surprise at their presence ; he bore a light in his hand, which, as he passed, showed him his listeners. Talbot's position between the two ladies did not fail to impress him ; he drew an inference from it with a quickness natural to him.

"One of them will be Lady Talbot," he thought, as he passed by ; "which will be the best ?" His "best" did not mean best for Talbot or best for the lady, but best for the *Church*. "The widow is worldly, and would neglect the Church," he continued, to himself ; "the fair girl is prejudiced, and would oppose it ; the first were the easier to convert, the second most worth converting ; it is a drawn game. I will not interfere."

Mrs. Romilly, who had her notions regarding the priest, followed him, and thanked him for his music.

The rest of the guests followed Seveli and the light back into the drawing-room. Talbot lingered behind, Harriett turned round towards him, and in a determined way asked for the ring.

“ Here it is, Harriett ; you did not think I meant to keep it ? ” He replaced the ring, and kissed the hand, adding : “ You are rash to wear rings on that finger ; it misleads people.”

Harriett was thankful that the darkness hid her glowing face. When they were all once more assembled in the drawing-room, Mrs. Romilly related to Seveli, Talbot's exciting legend.

As the Maynes walked home, Harriett thought : “ This is the hand he kissed just now—silly hand !—it was just above Justin's ring, too. I can cover the spot with my finger. I wonder if it is red.” Then she

felt for the ring, as though it were a charm to keep off evil.

Harriett, when she had gained her own room, shut to the door, put down the candlestick, and drew off her glove, repeating : "Is it red, I wonder?" No, the hand was as white and unstained as usual, but on the third finger flashed a brilliant diamond, and Justin's ring, a simple pearl, was gone !

Harriett, with a flush of indignation that she had been so deceived, tore off the ring, and turned suddenly towards the door, impelled to rush to Talbot Hall, and claim her own again. The folly of the proceeding struck her at the second step. A midnight walk across the park, in order to call Lord Talbot from his bed, was hardly justified, even by her present loss, if loss it could be called. It was really a beautiful ring ; she took it up again, and turned it over in her palm. It was his ring, she had seen him wear it, and had admired it one day, telling him to give it as a donation to the schools,

if he had no money ; and he had answered that he would not part with that ring, except to some one he loved as well as himself. "No, no," thought Harriett, as the recollection flooded her mind with sudden light ; "no, he can never love any one as he does himself." Nevertheless, she put the ring on again, and admired it. The setting was very delicate, such as a lady might wear ; the stone was large. "Could he have possibly made a mistake, and slipped the wrong ring on my hand ?" she asked herself. "No, it was not possible ; he meant it for me, and perhaps he loves me. I will think so, at least, to-night." She did not take the ring off, and when in bed put her hand near her lips ; the same sweet words were the last in her mind before she slept, "He loves me, he loves me!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"He has a sly, equivocating vein
That likes me not." SHELLEY.

"All actual heroes are essential men,
And all men possible heroes."
E. B. BROWNING.

IN those pleasant midsummer days there was ever a scent of new-mown hay around Maxwell. The days were long and drowsy, the evenings bright and clear. It was not weather to incline one to any arduous task; it seemed cruel to have to work at all. The days seemed specially made for dreaming and love-making; and St. Clare took advantage of them. He was always at the Greshams'; "the spirit in his feet" led him—who knows how?—to Ethel's side. In the morning they would sketch together, Mrs. Gresham accompanying them. Now Mrs. Gresham was not so very partial

to long walks, or sitting for hours on a camp-stool; she was tormented at such time with perpetual fears of damp grass or ants' nests; but still, with apparent cheerfulness, she went, in fulfilment of her duty to that demi-god of all respectable people, Propriety—a deity apt to be but little worshipped by the young, but held in great veneration and propitiated by more or less painful sacrifices as years advance. Ethel exhibited the rebellious spirit of youth, and told her mother it was great nonsense not to let her go out alone with Mr. St. Clare; he was quite a gentleman, and surely *she* could be trusted. But Mrs. Gresham was obdurate, and shook her head solemnly and mysteriously. “It must not be, Ethel,” said she; “therefore, do not be wilful.”

While Lord Talbot is away at the Leslies', St. Clare remains all day at the doctor's house. He stays to dinner with the slightest persuasion, and lingers through the afternoon reading poetry to the ladies

as they work, or touching up Ethel's sketches—anything as an excuse to be near her.

And Martin Langley—what did he think of these proceedings, now he was told St. Clare was not Miss Gresham's lover?

He had scarcely time to think of anything, for the fever was raging in the neighbourhood, and his hands and head were full of business. He came home at any odd times to take his meals (sometimes he took none at all), and was accustomed to find this fair young man in the drawing-room or garden. Langley could not fraternize with him; he did not exactly dislike, but he certainly did not like him; he could not get on at all in his company, and felt he had nothing to say to Mr. St. Clare; he was "mum" directly that young man appeared. So Langley preferred lately taking his meals in the little room adjoining the surgery to meeting the family circle. Ethel ventured into this sanctum once, and endeavoured to

tease him into a good humour, but the fumes of his meerschaum pipe, and his determined sulkiness, drove her back to the drawing-room and St. Clare.

When Mr. Gresham returned home in the evening, he became accustomed to St. Clare's presence. He did not say much about the matter, and seemed rather glad to have a companion for a stroll. But the doctor was not blind to the aspect of events ; he conversed earnestly with the young man, urged him to a more active existence, sounded his depths, and beneath the light waves of fancy and indolence found the pearl of a pure heart.

The father saw three objections to him as a son-in-law. Firstly, he had no occupation ; secondly, he was Talbot's friend ; thirdly, he wore his hair in long ringlets, like a girl.

But these would not have been sufficient objections to make him seriously refuse, had St. Clare offered ; but St. Clare had no such

intention just yet—no intention save to linger within the fascination of the spell which bound him. St. Clare is walking towards a great point in his history, where the many forces of his life will meet and do battle with him.

One night, when Talbot and St. Clare had been dining at the Leslie's, and were riding home, the following conversation took place between them :—

“Henry, that Seveli is a vastly clever fellow. Did you hear him arguing with me on the efficacy of that relic he showed us—the finger of Saint Somebody or other?”

“Saint Benedict, scoffer!” replied Talbot. “Father Petre, as you say, is vastly clever. I'd back him against any one in discussion. I think you were conquered, involved in labyrinths of confusion, made to contradict yourself, and retire, angry and baffled, from the field. You seemed silenced by his reference to that passage in the Book of Kings, where a dead man is brought to

life by touching the bones or relics of Elisha."

"Well, it is enough to make any one savage when he fights with such unfair weapons. Do you notice his slow, soft enunciation—how he lays out his net of sophistry, and it is thrown over you, and you are enveloped in its soft folds before you know where you are? When you try to get out, they are iron bands. Besides, he is so gentle and tolerant—never loses his temper. I feel myself under a sort of mesmeric influence, and am brought to acquiesce in the propositions that I most doubt."

"Take care, *mon ami*," Talbot said, with a laugh; "he has found out you are a man of property, with no particular object in life, and a taste for music and painting; he will attack you through your love of the beautiful, and prove to you that the Church of Rome is the only Church whose worship satisfies the æsthetic faculties in

man ; that the greatest works of art, the paintings of the old masters, and the glorious cathedrals of the middle ages, are the results of her inspiration ; that our Church was the fount of chivalry, with all its noble and unselfish aspirations ; and I shall have the satisfaction of seeing you brought over to Rome, and your life dedicated to the Church."

"No, no ; I hope I am not quite such a fool as that," replied St. Clare.

Then they rode on in silence for some time ; the tramp of their horses' hoofs on the dry road was the only sound to break the stillness. It was a lovely night, a warm summer night, with a cloudless sky, and a light breeze stirring the trees, and fanning the horsemen's faces as they rode to meet it.

"How clear the heavens, with their myriad stars, seem to-night," thought St. Clare ; "how real and near, while the earth is hidden by veils of rising mists." Would that the

heavens were always as clear to him, the earth as far and dim ! Oh ! that he could forget the clogging cares of life, and spring upward into the intangible glories of the existence that was above him, around him, the spirit-life that only came to him in brief glimpses, and left him again on the low level of earth !

Then his thoughts wandered back to his conversation with Seveli and his "sly, equivocating vein;" and drawing in his horse a little, he turned to Talbot, and said, with sudden vehemence :

"Well, considering you see and acknowledge that fellow's trickery, I wonder you let him gull you as you have done. You must have more sense than to believe the twaddle of the Romish Church ?"

"Softly, softly. You are presuming a little too much on the privilege of friendship. But to satisfy you, we will allow the supposition that I don't credit what you irreverently term twaddle ; we will also

allow that I think one creed is as good as another."

"Then why, in the name of reason, did you take the trouble to change?"

"To prove which was the best, to be sure. How could I tell until I had tried it? Outsiders have no right to judge. Creeds, my young friend, are the expression of human nature's craving for something visible and substantial where all is unseen. After much consideration, I consider they are all equally futile. I shall not take the trouble to go back now. We know nothing, and I care to know nothing; I shall not trouble my head about the matter. 'We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded by a sleep.'"

"No faith at all, Henry! It seems very awful." And St. Clare's voice vibrated with emotion. "It appears to me like looking into a gulf of gloom."

"Have *you* any faith?" asked Talbot, with sarcasm.

"I trust so."

"I should like to know what it is—I think Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' would sum it up."

"Well, I tell you what—I believe in Robert and Harriett Mayne, and I have a notion that their faith is the true one. If they took the trouble to talk to me as Sevell does, I fancy I should soon be brought to their way of thinking."

"Very probably," replied Talbot. "It is easier to agree with the ardent *unreasonings* of a saint-like maiden with auburn hair, than to listen to a priest. I shall give Harriett the hint; she could easily work on your impressionable nature. I should say a Bible-class, now, with you, little Ethel, and Harriett would——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted St. Clare, angrily; and then, condemning himself for being so foolish as to speak earnestly to such a trifler as Talbot, he relapsed into silence.

They were nearing Maxwell, when Talbot suddenly exclaimed :—

“ Good heavens ! what is that ? ”

St. Clare looked to the left in the direction indicated, and there were flames—flames rising from behind a belt of trees that hid the hall.

Henry Talbot swore bitterly, and struck his horse into a gallop. St. Clare followed close behind.

Along the lane, past the Greshams' gate (where St. Clare, despite his anxiety, had a momentary thought of Ethel, and wondered if she saw the flames), up the hill they sped, till their horses strained and panted for breath. Talbot, cruelly urging by spur and whip his failing steed, distanced his companion, who said to himself: “ Just like Henry's old reckless haste. As if a moment sooner or later could make much difference ! I will not ruin a good horse.” And now a turn in the road revealed that it was not the Hall in flames, but

the miserable tenement inhabited by the Burrows.

Talbot had dismounted, and was standing in the road with the bridle over his arm. "Here's a wild-goose chase!" he cried, as St. Clare approached, "to frighten a fellow into ruining my good old Bess. She's snorting and groaning away in fine style! Curse the hovel! I wish I'd pulled it down years ago!"

While he stopped to examine his horse, a number of people came up the hill with the parish engine. Foremost was Mr. Mayne, without his hat, and his hair streaming in the wind. He did not recognize the two gentlemen in his haste, and would have passed on, but St. Clare caught his arm, and asked if he could help him.

"By all means, come on!" so St. Clare flung himself off his horse, and giving it in charge to some man who offered to take it, commenced with great zeal to demolish the palings to let the engine through.

The next thing he heard, as the water fell hissing over the burning roof, was Robert Mayne, calling out : " Where are the Burrows ? They are all out, I hope."

Twenty people answered in a breath : " He's inside."

" Where ?" and St. Clare and the vicar were pushed forward until they could see something like a figure.

" Why does he not come out ?" asked Mr. Mayne.

" Why he's 'most mad, sir, I think. His wife and child's gone, and he's about frantic. He'll burn hisself to death, I think."

" This is awful—what can be done ?" cried the clergyman to St. Clare.

" If he won't come out, he must be fetched out," St. Clare replied. " I'll see to this ; you look after the men at the engine, Mayne."

This was all said in a minute. The next, St. Clare had borrowed a jacket from one of the crowd, and wrapping it over his

head, dashed into the flames, calling to any one who liked to follow him. Of course, Mayne did not want calling ; he was close at his heels, and two men, inspired by their example, ventured after them. He felt the sparks from the burning door fall over him as he rushed in, but he cared not ; all the heroic was alive within him ; he would willingly have been burnt to death in the rescue of a fellow-mortal, if only Ethel would weep over his courageous end ! He found Burrows, and caught him by the shoulders, but was quickly shaken off, for the man had double his strength ; he must have failed, had not the vicar and the two who had followed them now seized Burrows and dragged him outside, where his rescue was hailed with a shout. He fought all who came near him with desperation, and was not overcome until some one bound his arms behind him with a piece of cord.

“ Let me alone, I say ! ” he exclaimed.
“ What right have you to interfere ? I’ll

burn the house and myself too, if I likes." At which frantic acknowledgment of his guilt, St. Clare promptly tied a handkerchief over his mouth, and whispered to him that he had better be quiet, as, if it were known, it was a case of transportation; but he would not witness against him if he would hold his own tongue.

Unfortunately for Burrows, however, others had overheard his rash words. By this time, the efforts of Mr. Mayne and the men who assisted him at the engines were successful in subduing the flames, and the building was a heap of blackened ruins. When the reverend gentleman saw St. Clare and his prisoner, he came over to him and shook him heartily by the hand. As he stood before St. Clare, he certainly appeared a very uncouth figure; for, not satisfied with directing the others, he had himself been working at the pump with all his might: his coat was off, his shirt-sleeves rolled up, displaying a pair of be-

grimed arms, the perspiration had run down his face, and made tracks among the blacks that had fallen from the fire ; his hair stood all ways, and the refractory tie—that never was straight, as Mrs. Mayne so often remarked—was twisted round to the back of his head. He had more of the blacksmith than the clergyman in his appearance, just then. But Robert Mayne was in a blissful state of self-forgetfulness, and thought no more of his coat, tie, hat, or hair, than a disembodied spirit might be supposed to think.

The look of a true man, which he bore so unmistakeably, struck St. Clare, and so it did the crowd of rough, hearty fellows. They unanimously raised a cheer for the parson and his friend. The cheer brought Mr. Mayne to himself—the self of the Vicar of Maxwell—and he hastily sought for the coat that had been tossed to the ground in the ardour of his work. He found it well trampled under foot, dirty and torn, and

recalled, with a quick sigh of compunction, the expense of a new one, and how Maria would condemn him for this adventure when she saw his tattered condition. Then he turned to the crowd, and said briefly, but fervently :

“My dear friends, do not thank me or my kind friend here for saving this foolish man. Let us give the glory to God ; let us pray that Burrows may have been spared this night to prove himself a better and wiser man.”

“Hear, hear !” cried a few voices.

“Can any of you tell me why Mary Burrows has left her home, and where she has gone ?”

At this question, Burrows wildly strove to get free from the men who held him, and made urgent gestures to St. Clare to untie his mouth ; but his deliverer thought it far more prudent to keep him silent.

“Please your reverence,” said a man, coming forward, “we think’s as how she’s

gone with O'Connell, a old sweetheart of hern."

"I don't believe it!" cried Mr. Mayne, emphatically.

And St. Clare saw the hot tears run down the face of Burrows.

"She, whose baby I buried only a week ago?" continued Mr. Mayne; "I don't believe it. I do not know much of her—she is a Roman Catholic—but my sister has visited them, and I have always heard that she was a very respectable woman. We must not let a suspicion rest on any one's good name before we have proofs. For my own part, I do not believe that she has gone with O'Connell. Some of you find where he has been this evening; I will seek Mary Burrows myself."

Robert Mayne had one thing more to say, before which he paused and hesitated.

"These thatched roofs," he began, in a loud, confident tone, "are very dangerous this warm weather; they often kindle by

the heat of the sun. I am not surprised at this cottage having taken fire."

The recording angel who washed out Uncle Toby's oath no doubt let the same pitying tears fall over the record of this merciful prevarication. The suggestion deceived many of those present.

The policeman of the town, who had by this time arrived on the scene of action, in pursuance of his conceived duty, now came forward, and offered to handcuff Burrows and take him to the station, but Mr. Mayne interfered.

"I am, as you know, a justice of the peace," said he, "and I take this man entirely into my care; there is no charge on which he can be apprehended. But I think he is in a dangerous state of mind, and it may be well to take him home and talk to him until he gets into a calmer condition."

The policeman touched his hat, and departed. St. Clare and Mr. Mayne con-

sulted together for a few moments, and decided it would be of little use searching for the fugitive that night; they would start together the first thing in the morning; then the clergyman took charge of his prisoner, and went home. St. Clare, after looking about for Talbot, and finding that he had long ago gone away, and taken both the horses with him, followed his example, and was quickly at the Hall, and soon in bed; where, notwithstanding blistered hands and aching limbs, he slept more soundly, and dreamt less of Ethel Gresham, than he had done for weeks.

Robert Mayne did more in that night to win the hearts of the labouring classes to his side—the side of Christianity and virtue—than in a hundred sermons. Those who were not present heard accounts on all sides as to his kindness and bravery, and it did not strike them, as it did Mrs. Mayne, that because it was *not* his duty “to go racing after a cottage on fire, it

was a most nonsensical trick." No ; the very gratuitousness of the action made it more acceptable in their eyes.

" Bless him ! " said they ; " he don't mind putting himself out of the way to serve a body . "

Verily, deeds are better than words ; and it was proved to the people of Maxwell that their pastor loved them, as he loved his God, not only in word, but in deed and in truth.

Many of those who had not been to church since they were little children, shuffled in next Sunday beside their wives, and nearly made Robert Mayne weep with joy when he saw the rough faces, twitching with a feeling of half shyness, half emotion, raised to his.

It seemed to St. Clare that he had only been in bed an hour or two, when he was aroused by a loud tapping at his door. " Mr. Mayne wants you, please, sir, " called a voice that two or three times he had fan-

cied part of his dreams, and had been woven into them.

"Be quick, and dress; there's a good fellow!" cried a voice that thoroughly aroused him, and, flinging himself out of bed, he unlocked the door, at which Mr. Mayne entered, exclaiming, "He's gone!"

St. Clare looked astounded, and sat down on the edge of his bed, to recover himself, and consider the matter. "But I thought you said you would lock him up quite safely?"

"So I did," replied Mr. Mayne, with a vexed expression; "but I foolishly put him in a room on the ground floor. So, of course, he opened the window, and jumped out. I had a long talk with him last night, and he said—but I'll tell you all that as we go along. Get dressed quickly."

"But how are we going, and where are we going to?" asked St. Clare, who thought the enterprise did not look quite clear.

"Why, after Mary Burrows, to be sure. He has gone after her, and it is dreadful to

think of that poor creature getting loose, in his present excited state of mind. If she has gone with O'Connell, and he meets them, he will murder him, I believe. I find she was seen on the Lyton road yesterday afternoon, with her baby and a bundle ; but no one went by the train from there last night at all like her. Make haste, there's a good fellow. I don't know what I should do without you in this emergency."

St. Clare heard this with a thrill of gratification.

Mr. Mayne was going, when he put his head in again, and asked, "Do you think Lord Talbot would lend me a horse?"

"Of course. But there are two of mine in the stables. Tell the groom to saddle the gray mare and brown pony."

"Quiet, I hope?"

"Both, perfectly."

St. Clare, left alone, hastened to dress. He was startled, when he looked at his watch, to find it only six o'clock. He had

not been up so early for years. Suddenly, the remembrance of rising as early flashed across him—when he was at college, being aroused, in the gray November morning, by some terrible tidings; of hurrying off to London by the train. Then, too, a wife had left her husband. Why did all that horror come over him now, and paralyse his faculties? He thought he had forgotten it lately. Would that he could forget it!

A few moments more, and he was on horseback by Robert Mayne's side, the fresh morning air blowing on his face and dispelling all gloomy memories. Who could be sad on such a morning, with the quick motion of a good horse under him, stimulating the blood, and the sun shining on the earth, through hedge-rows hung with pearly dew, that made his burning eye look as though it were brimmed with tears!

Who could be sad on such a morning? It was like starting for the hunt, but keener sport; for the hunted was human, and the

chase was not mere pleasure. St. Clare was at last of some use, and he was happy!

As they rode along, Mr. Mayne related to his companion the particulars of the conversation that had taken place between himself and Burrows on the previous night. The man said he had not agreed well with his wife lately, partly on account of his jealousy of O'Connell, and partly in consequence of the interference of Father Petre Sevegli, who had lately excited Mary Burrows' mind, and worked on her fears, until, during her husband's absence one day, she suffered the children, who had been christened by Robert Mayne, to be re-baptized according to the Catholic ceremonial. Harriett's and Langley's kindness during the eldest child's illness had induced her to allow the child to be interred by Mr. Mayne. A few days after, Burrows heard that Sevegli had called to see her, and her husband had met with nothing but tears since.

"I have been informed," continued Mr.

Mayne," "that she was seen on the Lyton road about four o'clock yesterday afternoon, carrying her baby and a bundle. Strangely enough, O'Connell has left Maxwell for some days. This looks suspicious. Also, O'Connell is an Irishman, and a Roman Catholic. Now, there's no knowing but the poor, ignorant creature may have been persuaded that it is almost her duty to run away with O'Connell. As she has only been married by the Protestant form, I believe it can be dissolved. I cannot understand any man," continued Mr. Mayne, waxing wroth, "whatever may be his faith, striving to separate husband and wife. I should certainly feel it incumbent on me to endeavour to prevent two persons of different faiths from forming an alliance; but, when once formed, 'those whom God has joined, let no man put asunder.' I should scarcely have thought Mr. Seveli guilty of such baseness—but I forget—I beg your pardon—he is a friend of yours."

"Friend!" repeated St. Clare, scornfully. "I should be sorry to count *him* a friend. An acquaintance merely, I can assure you. Indeed, I think your suspicion of him very justifiable. Seveli has but one idea—that of his church; and I believe he would undertake any small knavery for the sake of its advancement and his own. I am only surprised he takes the trouble, for a penniless person—O'Connell may have money, though."

So conversing, the two companions rode on, past the Greshams' house. The blinds were not drawn up, and all was still. St. Clare must needs think of the little, curly head that lay in oblivion on its pillow behind one of those blinds; his fancy hovered about the room where she slept, with awe and reverent tenderness; he pictured the white curtains and the white coverlet of her bed, on which one little hand might lie, while the lovely lips were parted, and the long, dark lashes lay upon the rosy cheek.

Had he been alone, the thought of her, and her sleeping innocence, would have induced him to ride past bare-headed. He wished he had been a knight, riding forth to a tournament, to defend her name and fame, while she lay all unconscious of the risk he ran. How his heart would beat beneath the favour she had worked him with her own fair hands. How, when he had vanquished her calumniators, and proved her pure and stainless to the world, he would have been content to die—to be borne to her feet, and lay his head in her lap; and, when she unclasped the cruel casque, and lifted the blood-stained curls back from his brow, to say, with his last breath, that he died for her, and asked only for the guerdon of one kiss. Then, as the tears fell upon his face, to meet her lips in one last, expiring kiss, in which his soul would pass away!

Oh! that he had done something worthy of her love, that he were not a mere, useless “butterfly.” Then he would be con-

tent to die—so content!—and leave the world, with all its unsolved problems, for others to vex over.

Different people love in a different fashion. St. Clare was a visionary, and he loved as a visionary; he rhapsodized about the ground Ethel trod on, and the air she breathed. So his imagination ran riot, while Robert Mayne talked, unheeded, of parish matters; and they rode on towards Lyton, in the fresh morning air.

END OF VOL. I.



